

Rebellion



JOSEPH MEDILL
PATTERSON





Rebellion





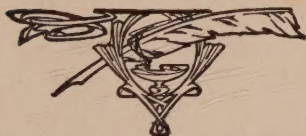
"Peccavi."

Rebellion

By

Joseph Medill Patterson

Author of "A Little Brother of the Rich," etc.



Illustrated by

Walter Dean Goldbeck

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NOTE

I wish to thank Mr. Francis Hackett for reading the unrevised proofs of this story.

J. M. Patterson.

JIM CONNOR

"J. O. M."

"Nope, promised to be home on time for supper."

"Get panned last night?"

"Yep."

The group of men turned to the clock which was ticking high up on the wall between the smudgy painting of Leda and The Swan and the framed group photograph of famous pugilists from Paddy Ryan to the present day.

"It's only nineteen past; plenty time for just one more."

Jim Connor compared his watch with the clock and found they tallied. The grave bartender took the dice and box from behind the cigar counter and courteously placed them upon the bar.

"Well," bargained Jim, "if it *is* just one more."

"J. O. M." they chorused, and the dice rolled upon the polished oak.

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“What’ll it be, gents?”

“Beer.”

“Scotch high.”

“Bourbon.”

“A small beer, Jack.”

“Beer.”

“Yours, Jim?” prompted the watchful bartender.

“Well—I guess you can give me a cigar this time, Jack.”

The practiced bartender, standing by his beer pump, slid the whisky glasses along the slippery counter with a delicate touch, as a skillful dealer distributes cards. He set out the red and smoky whiskies, the charged water, the tumbler, with its cube of ice; drew two glasses of beer, scraped the top foam into the copper runway, and almost simultaneously, as if he had four hands, laid three open cigar boxes before Jim, who selected a dark “Joe Tinker.”

“Join us, Jack,” invited the loser of the dice game, hospitably waving his hand. The efficient bartender drew a small half-glass of lithia for himself. Five feet rested upon the comfortable rail before the bar, there was the

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little pause imposed by etiquette, six glasses were raised to eye-level.

"Here's whatever."

"Happy days."

"S'looking at you," ran the murmur.

"The big fellow!" exclaimed one.

Chorus: "Yes, the big fellow!"

"I'll sure have to come in on that," said Jim, pressing between two shoulders to the bar. "A little bourbon, Jack," he asked briskly.

The other glasses were lowered until Jim also received his.

Then all were again raised to eye-level. Unanimously, "The big fellow!"

Heads were thrown back and each ego there, except the bartender, received a charming little thrill.

The beer men wandered to the back of the saloon and dipped into a large pink hemisphere of cheese. The whisky men suppressed coughs. Jim tipped his head back about five degrees and inquired, "Is the big fellow coming 'round to-night?"

"He's due," replied Jack, wiping his bar dry again.

"How's things looking to you?"

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“We—ell, there’s always a lot of knockers about.”

“Yes, ‘pikers’ like Ben Birch and Coffey Neal, that line up with the big fellow for ten years and then throw him overnight because he won’t let ’em name the alderman this time. And he always treated ’em right. Better than me. An’ jou ever hear me kicking?”

“Nary once, Jim.”

“That’s because I am a white man with my friends. But these other Indians—well,” said Jim earnestly, “God knows ingratitude gets my goat.”

Jim Connor was a ward heeler and the big fellow was his ward boss. Jim was allowed to handle some of the money in his precinct at primaries and elections; he landed on the public pay-roll now and then; he was expected to attend funerals, bowling matches, saloons, picnics, cigar shops and secret society meetings throughout the year; his influence lay in his strength with the big fellow. Did a storekeeper want an awning over the sidewalk, or did he not want vigorous building inspection, if he lived in Jim’s precinct, he told Jim, and Jim told the big fellow, and the big fellow told the alderman, and the

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alderman arranged it with his colleagues on a basis of friendship. In return, the store-keeper voted with the organization, which was the big fellow, who was thus enabled always to nominate and usually to elect candidates who would do what he told them. He told them to line up with the interests who had subscribed to the campaign fund—and he was the campaign fund. The entire process is pretty well known nowadays through the efforts of Mr. Lincoln Steffens and his associate muckrakers.

But there is no immediate cause for alarm; this is not a political novel.

The clock pointed nearly to seven and Jim, when he saw it, sighed. That meant unpleasantness. His supper certainly would be cold, but he wasn't thinking of that. He was thinking of his wife. She was sure to make him uncomfortable in some way or other, because he had broken his promise about being home on time. Probably she would be silent. If there was anything he hated, it was one of her silent spells. Just "No" and "Yes," and when he asked her what in hell was the matter, she would say "Nothing."

The trouble was, though, that he always

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knew what the matter was, even when she said "Nothing." What devil's power was there in wives, anyway, that enabled them to hurt by merely not speaking? He had tried silences on her a lot of times, but they never worked, not once. He liked the old days better, when she used to scold and plead and weep.

He remembered the first time he had come home drunk, half a dozen years ago, when he had barely turned from bridegroom to husband. She helped him that night to undress and to go to bed. And she had done other things for him, too, that even now he was ashamed to remember. And the next day she hadn't scolded once, but had fetched him a cup of coffee in bed as soon as he woke up. It surprised him; overwhelmed him. It had made him very humble. He had never been so repentant before or since.

She didn't reproach him that time—not a word. He didn't mean she had one of her silences—those didn't begin until much later; but she tried to talk about their usual affairs, as if nothing had happened. And everything had happened. They both knew that.

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It wasn't until the next evening, thirty-six hours later, that he came home to find her a miserable heap upon the front room sofa, her face buried. He stood in the middle of the room looking at her helplessly, his words of greeting cut short. Every now and then her small shoulders heaved up and he heard her sob. She must have been crying a long time. He implored her, "Oh, don't, Georgia, don't; please don't; won't you please not?"

After a little while she stood up and put her arms about him and kissed him. He had never had such a feeling for her, it seemed to him, not even when they walked down the aisle together and she leaned on him so heavily. And then he kissed her solemnly, in a different way than ever before. He took the pledge that night, and he kept it, too, for a long time, nearly a year. That was the happy time of his life.

When he did begin again, it was gradually. She knew, after a time, he wasn't teetotal any more, and she didn't seem to mind so much. He remembered they talked about it. He explained that he could drink moderately, that she could trust him now, and mustn't

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ever be afraid of any more—accidents. And that very same night he came home drunk.

She cried again, but it wasn't as solemn and as terrible for either of them as the time before.

There had been other times since, many of them. And she had grown so cursedly contemptuous and cold. Well—he didn't know that it was altogether his fault. He had heard that alcoholism was a disease. But she had said it was a curable disease, and if he couldn't cure it, he had better die. His own wife had told him that. God knows he had tried to cure it. He had put every pound he had into the fight; not once, but a hundred times. He had gone to Father Hervey and taken the pledge last Easter Day, and—here he was with a whiskey glass in his hand.

He looked across into the high bar mirror. His eyes were yellow and his cheeks seemed to sag down. He put his hand to them to touch their flaccidity. His hair was thinning, there were red patches about his jaws where veins had broken, and his mouth seemed loose and ill-defined under the mustache which he wore to conceal it. He frowned fiercely, thrust his chin forward and gritted

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his teeth tightly to make of himself the reflection of a strong man—one who could domineer, like the big fellow. But it was no use—the mirror gave him back his lie.

The afternoon rush was over, the evening trade had not begun, and the saloon was empty, save for a group of scat-players at the farther end.

Jim's friends had gone, but he remained behind, in gloomy self-commiseration, his shoulders propped against the partition which marked off the cigar stand. He was thinking over his troubles, which was his commonest way of handling them.

Whoever it was that invented the saying, "Life is just one damned thing after another"—he knew, he knew. Jim had bought three or four post-cards variously framing the sentiment and placed them upon his bureau, side by side, for Georgia to see. It was his criticism of life.

You politicians and publicists, if you want to know what the public wants, linger at the rack in your corner drug store and look over the saws and sayings on the post-cards.

Jim hoped that the ones he had picked out would subtly convey to his wife that all were

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adrift together upon a most perplexing journey and that it ill-behooved any of them to—well there was a post-card poem that just about hit it off—and he put it on the bureau with the others:

“THERE IS SO MUCH BAD IN THE BEST OF US
AND SO MUCH GOOD IN THE WORST OF US,
THAT IT HARDLY BEHOOVES ANY OF US
TO TALK ABOUT THE REST OF US.”

But she hadn't taken the least notice. She didn't seem to understand him at all. Oh, well—women were light creatures of clothes and moods and two-edged swords for tongues—or deadly silence. What could they know about the deep springs of life—about how a man felt when in trouble?

Jim shifted his position slightly, for the hinge was beginning to trouble his shoulder blade, and fetched a sigh that was almost a moan. Such had been his life, merely that, and the future looked as bad or worse. The shining bar grew a bit misty before him and he knew it wouldn't take much to make his eyes run over.

“Anything wrong, Jim?” inquired the sympathetic bartender.

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“Just a little blue to-night, Jack, that’s all.”

“Sometimes I get into those spells myself. Hell, ain’t they?”

Jim nodded. “I suppose they come from nervousness.”

The bartender nodded back. “Or liver,” said he, setting out the red bottle. “Have a smile.”

“No, I don’t want any more of that damned stuff. A man’s a fool to let it get away with him, and sometimes I figure I better watch out—not but what I can’t control myself, y’understand.” There was the slightest interrogation in his tone.

“Sure y’can, Jim; I know that. Still,” dubiously, “like you say, a fellow ought to watch out. It’ll land the K. O. on the stoutest lad in shoes, if he keeps a-fightin’ it.”

“It’s for use and not abuse. Ain’t I right?”

The bartender conspicuously helped himself to a swallow of lithia. “Yep, sure,” he said. “D’you know, Jim, I’m kind of sorry you didn’t go home to supper to-night.”

“So’m I, but I got to talking——”

“Why don’t you go now?”

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"Too blue, Jack, and home is fierce when I get there with a breath."

"Remember the time the little woman come here after you?"

"Oh, it's no use bringing that up now," said Jim sadly. "She liked me then. Give me a ginger ale."

Jim took his glass and sat alone at a round table by the wall, under the painting of Pasi-phae and The Shower of Gold. This saloon, like many others, in Chicago, ran to classical subjects.

Jim relit his cigar and slowly turned the pages of a *Fliegende Blätter*, looking at the pictures and habitually picking out those letters in the text which resembled English letters. It was a frayed copy which had inhabited the saloon for many months, and showed it. Jim had thumbed it twenty times before, but he was doing it again to appease his subconsciousness, to give himself the appearance of activity of some sort.

But he was looking through the German pages to the years behind him. Politics—maybe that was the trouble. Politicians, at least little fellows like him, got more feathers than chicken out of it. If he hadn't quit that

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job with the railroad—but no, they were drivers, and there was no future in the railroad business for a fellow like him, a book-keeper. He might have stayed there all his life and not thirty men in the entire offices have been the wiser, or have ever heard of him.

In fact, he had bettered himself by going with the publishing firm. He seemed to have prospects there. It wasn't his fault they blew up and he was out on the street again. That was how he got into politics—sort of drifted in after meeting the big fellow canvassing the saloons one night, when he, Jim, had nothing else to do.

The big fellow was so attractive, so sure of himself, and Jim would have seemed a fool if he had refused the offer to clerk in an election precinct that fall. There was a little money in it, and a little importance.

The big fellow had asked him to please see what he could do for the ticket that fall, and of course he had. It was agreeable to be consulted by the famous Ed Miles about plans and all that. He had never been consulted in the railroad office, or even by those publishers.

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After election, without solicitation, Miles had Jim appointed a deputy sheriff for the State of Illinois, County of Cook, ss. Of course, he took it. There was nothing else in sight just then. The pay was fair, the hours good, and besides, there was no time-clock to punch and no superintendent always hovering about.

After a time the big fellow told Jim pleasantly, but firmly, that his job had to be passed around to some of the other boys, and Jim resigned. But the big fellow let it be known that Jim was still a trusted scout. That was an asset. The landlord knocked something off the rent of his flat, the street car company gave him a book of tickets, one of the bill-board companies sent him a nice check for Christmas; but he had done some rather particular work for them. He had respectable charge accounts in several places and wasn't pressed.

But, after all, one cannot get rich on that sort of thing; so when the child died, his wife went back downtown as a stenographer in a life insurance office. She had been a stenographer before their marriage.

ONE FLESH

The short swinging doors opened briskly and five tall men entered quietly. Jim tipped his chair forward upon its four legs. The scat game delayed itself.

The five lined up at the bar. "Beer," said the one with the boiled shirt. The skillful bartender drew five glasses of foam.

Jim sat still in his chair, hesitating to glance even obliquely toward the proceedings. What was one against five?

The tall man with the boiled shirt pointed to his glass, but did not touch it. Nor did any of his companions touch theirs. The saloon knighthood has not abandoned symbolism.

"Does that go?"

"It goes, Coffey Neal."

"And we don't get a lithograph in the front window?"

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“You don’t.”

The five men withdrew a little for conference. Then Coffey Neal paid his reckoning with a quarter and a nickel.

The bartender rang up twenty-five cents on the register. Neal pointed to the five-cent piece upon the bar.

“That’s for yourself, Jack.”

The sardonic bartender placed it between his teeth. “It’s phony,” said he. “Take it back and put it in your campaign fund.” He smiled, keeping his right hand below the bar.

“After election,” Coffey Neal remarked through his nose, “your old man (he meant Jack’s father-in-law) can’t sell this place for the fixtures in it.”

Jack concealed a yawn with his left hand.

“You’re the twenty-second wop since the first of the year was going to put us out of business, and we’re signing a lease for our new place next Monday. It’s where your brother used to be located.”

One of the enemy, a stocky fellow with a brakeman’s black shirt, was constructing sandwiches of sliced bologna and rye at the lunch counter.

“I know you’re not eating much lately, old

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boy, since you begun stringing with Coffey," smiled Jack from the corner of his mouth, "but those is for our customers."

Blackshirt turned quickly about, sweeping the pink hemisphere of cheese upon the floor and shivering it.

"Oh, dreadful!" he protested, falsetto. "My word, how sad!"

He trod some of the cheese into the sawdust. "Mr. Barman, ah, Mr. Barman, you may charge the damages to me—at the Blackstone."

There was a roar of laughter from the others. It looked like rough-housing, and damage to fixtures. The scat players had vanished, in their naive Teutonic way, through the side door. Jack began to hope he wouldn't have to draw, for a shooting always black-eyes a saloon's good name and quiet scat custom shies at it.

Neal delivered Jim a tremendous thump on the shoulder. "Why, if it isn't my dear old college chump." Another thump. "Maybe you can buy us a drink with the collar off." A third thump.

"Now, can the comedy stuff, Coffey," Jim snarled, smilingly. If only he could steer

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Coffey away from the fight he seemed bent on picking. "I'll buy—sure. Why not?"

"Then you'll go across the street to do it," Jack inserted. "This ain't a barrel house."

Neal seized Jim's ear and lifted him to his feet. "You'll buy here, and now." Three of the men gathered about Jim. The other two, standing well apart, were watching Jack. There would be three pistols out, or none.

Jim was being slowly propelled to the bar, when the straw doors swung briskly and the big fellow entered. His shoulders, hands, legs and jaw were thick, and his eyes were amazingly alert.

Unspeakable peace spread through Jim. He knew that somehow or other the big fellow was going to get him out of this.

Indeed, that was what the boss had come for. News of the foray on this citadel of his had been grapevined to him up the block and around a corner.

He sized up the situation very quickly. There was Coffey Neal, the trouble-maker, the Judas who had refused to take his orders any longer. He was the one to be done for. The other four were merely Hessians, torsos, not headpieces. They slugged for a living,

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on either side of industrial disputes, according to the price—sometimes on both sides in the same strike.

“Have a drink, boys,” said the great Ed Miles.

It surprised every man in the room. Jim’s heart sank down again. Could it be that the big fellow was going to take water? Then it was the end of his reign and the end of Jim’s days at court. There was a pause, a whispering. Ed, standing sidewise to the bar, held his open right hand, palm upwards, behind his coat so that only Jack could see it.

“And what if we wouldn’t?” Coffey spoke with slow bravado.

“This.” The big fellow flashed at him, and dropped the bung-starter heavily behind his ear. Coffey crumpled upon the floor. The sluggers hesitated half a second, then piled on Ed so quickly that Jack didn’t dare use his gun. Instead, he ran around the bar and twisted his arm under the chin of blackshirt, pulling him away from the heap. He thrust him up in the air, using his own knee for a lever, then dropped him heavily on his back on the floor and kicked his head. There was no time for niceties.

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Meanwhile, Jim had taken futile hold of another slugger's foot, who easily shook him off. He was cautiously planning for another hold—very cautiously indeed, not being anxious to become too completely immersed in the proceedings, when all at once the place became full of people.

Strong and willing arms eagerly and quickly unraveled the tangle.

“This is a hell of a game for eight o'clock in the evenin’.” It was the bass voice of public peace. “Oh!” concernedly, “is it you, Mr. Miles? Are you hurted?”

The big fellow felt his shaven skull where, in the melee, a brass knuckle had struck him a glancing blow. He looked at his red fingers. “Just a scrape, Sarje, not cracked,” he laughed.

“What's the charge?” asked the detective sergeant, solicitously.

“Tell 'em the facts,” enjoined the big fellow.

“Well,” began the efficient bartender, “Mr. Miles and me was talking quietly together here; he was standing just there with his back to the door, and I heard an awful yelling going up and down in the street. I knew

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it was Coffey Neal, hunting trouble, and drunk. They come in the cigar stand, swearing and cursing, saying they were looking for Ed Miles—to cut his heart out. But Ed says to me he didn't want any trouble in the place, so's he'd walk out, and he started out the side door, when Coffey and this black-shirt fellow come running in and threw that bowl of cheese at him—see it there—and jumped him. Then these other bad actors began kicking him, too, and I went in to separate 'em—and I guess that's all. Lucky you came in or there might have been trouble."

"What charge will I put agin 'em?"

"Drunk and disorderly; assault; assault and battery; assault with intent to kill; unprovoked assault; mayhem; assault with a deadly weapon—and I guess they ain't got no visible means of support," suggested the big fellow. "Oh! yes, and conspiracy."

"Let it go at that," said Jack.

The sergeant wrote it down. The sluggers were silent. The case had become one for lawyers' fees. Their own talking couldn't do any good.

"Any witnesses?" asked the sergeant.

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"Me," said Jim. "It was the way Jack says."

"Put 'em in the wagon," commanded law and order.

Coffey Neal was picking up his threads again at the place he had dropped them.

"And what if we won't drink with you, Ed Miles?" he muttered, somewhat scattered.

"Likely the Bridewell, Coffey," laughed the big fellow.

The vanquished were escorted out into the night.

The victor and his vassals, perhaps a dozen of them by this time, remained in possession of the field.

"Good thing I had those coppers planted before I started anything," commented the big fellow. "Those strong-arm guys like to got me going at the end."

"They certainly handled themselves very useful," Jack acknowledged.

"They gotta be with us after this, or get out of town." The big fellow turned suddenly on Jim. "And you, you yellow pup," he roared, seizing him by the collar, "what were you doing while they was pounding me up? D'you think you were at a ball game,

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hey?" He shook him back and forth until his jaws cracked.

"I—I was trying—I got one of 'em by the leg, and he——"

"Yes, like you'd pick flowers in the spring — sweet and pretty — that's the way you grabbed his leg." He lifted Jim from the ground and flung him on the floor. "Yellow pup!" he repeated passionately, over and over again.

Jim raised himself to his elbow, but did not dare to go further. The big fellow's eyes were still blazing.

"Honest, Ed, I was trying to help."

Miles took a step toward him. "You're a G—d d—d liar!" he shouted.

Jim tried to meet his look. It was a wretched business to be called that name before a dozen others—it had happened to him before, but he always hated it. Still the big fellow seemed especially vicious and dangerous just now; Jim knew how senseless it was to cross him when he was having one of his spells, and besides, they never lasted long, anyway. Jim dropped his eyes again, acknowledging the justice of the discipline.

Miles threw a ten-dollar bill on the bar and

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broke the tension with a jolly laugh. "Well, I guess we've put Coffey Neal out o' this primary," said he. "Plunge in, lads." Jack served each man, but nothing for Jim. The code provided for a final display of magnanimity by the fountainhead. "Come ahead, Jim," he growled, kindly.

Serenity unfolded again her frightened wings and the smoke of peace increased and multiplied over a leader fitted to lead and followers fitted to follow.

The ensuing celebration spread itself over many hours and into many taverns. There was some agreeable close harmony, to which Jim joined a pleasant baritone, and much revilement of all double-crossers, from Judas and Benedict Arnold down to Coffey Neal, and a certain Irish party whose name now escapes me, but who grievously misbehaved himself during a Fenian incident.

Very frequently they reached the shank of the evening—as often, indeed, as anybody wanted to go home. And in the big fellow's mouth the shank was ever a cogent argument.

Eventually the ultimate question as to their further destination was put, and here the big fellow stood aside, permitting perfect lati-

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tude of decision. He was a politician and he knew that he could not possibly afford to have it said by the wives of the ward that he influenced their husbands toward sin. He could afford to have almost everything else said about him, but not that.

Jim wavered, then resisted temptation. His record in that particular respect had been almost absolutely clean.

He walked home stiffly, fighting with the skill of the practiced alcoholic for the upright position and the shortest distance between two points.

His early morbidity had vanished. If he had done one thing badly that evening, he had done another thing well. Whatever his wife, Georgia, might urge against him in regard to his conviviality, wasn't he, after all, one of the most faithful husbands he knew? For all her superior airs, she had much to be grateful for in him.

He entered his flat with little scraping of the keyhole, and cautiously undressed in the front room. It *was* late—much later than he had hoped for. He could just make out the hands of the clock on the mantelpiece by the light from the street lamp.

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He opened the door to their bedroom so slowly, so slowly and steadily, and then—as usual, that cursed hinge betrayed him. The number of times he had determined to oil it—yet he always forgot to. To-morrow he wouldn't forget—that was his flaming purpose.

Psychological flux and flow may be deduced from door hinges as well as from the second cup of coffee for breakfast or the plaintive lady standing immediately before your hard-won seat in the street car. Jim would never oil the hinge in the morning, because that would somehow imply he expected to come in very late again at night, and he never expected to—in the morning.

But her breathing remained regular, absolutely regular; he had this time escaped the snare of the hinge.

The gas jet burned in a tiny flame. She had fallen into the habit of keeping a night-light during the past three or four years. At first he had objected that it interfered with his sleep, but she had been singularly persistent about it. She hadn't given him her reasons; indeed, she had never analyzed them. It was nothing but a bit of prepos-

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terous feminism, which she kept to herself, that the light made a third in their room.

She lay with her back to him, far over on her side of the bed. He could see where her hip rose, and vaguely through the covering the outline of her limbs. Her shoulders were crumpled forward, and the upper one responded to her breathing, and marked it. Under her arm, crossed in front of her, he knew was the swelling of her breast.

And then at the neck was the place where the hair was parted and braided, the braids wound forward about her eyes—a very peculiar way to treat one's hair.

What a different thing a woman was! He had seen her lying so countless times, and yet the strangeness had never worn off. Indeed, curiously enough, there seemed even more of it now than when they had just married, and she was entirely new.

He often thought a woman didn't seem exactly a person—that is, not like him, and he was certainly a person—but something else; just as good, perhaps, but quite other. Her body, of course—well, agreeable as it might be, still he was glad he wasn't made that way, for it seemed so ineffective.

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And one of them could stand a good man on his head. He simply couldn't get the hang of that. If a man was angry and sulked, he didn't mind. In fact, he preferred it to being knocked about as the big fellow sometimes did to him. He had never cared what man sulked, his brother or father or any of them.

And yet this woman, she—he looked at her intently, earnestly, as if finally to solve her—she was very beautiful. And she was his wife.

He crept into bed, very softly, for she might wake up. But then, it briefly occurred to him, what if she did? He was perfectly sober—at least to all intents and purposes. He could talk perfectly straight; he felt sure of that.

Perhaps she would now wake of her own accord. That would be the best solution, and then he could appear drowsy, as if he, too, had just been aroused from sleep.

He sighed loudly and turned himself over in the bed, but she gave no sign.

“Georgia,” he whispered very low.

Pause.

One Flesh

“Georgia,” a little louder, “are you awake?”

No answer.

He touched her, as if carelessly. She stirred. Ah, she would—no, her breathing was markedly the breathing of slumber. Perhaps she was pretending. Oh, well, what was the use of his trying, if she was going to act so?

He turned noisily back to his side of the bed. He was disappointed in her. Was it fair of her to pretend—if she was pretending? After all, she was his wife.

A husband has his rights. That was what the church said. Otherwise, what was the use of getting married and supporting a woman—well, most men supported their wives, and he intended to do so again soon, very soon.

Yes, he had the teachings on his side. He wanted nothing beyond the bond. It was holy wedlock, wasn't it?

He placed his hand upon her waist. And yet she would give no sign. More resolutely than before she counterfeited the presentment of sleep.

“Georgia!” he spoke aloud.

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“What is it?” she said, quickly, sitting up, her black braids falling back on her slim shoulders.

“I just wanted to say good night,” he muttered, huskily.

“Good night,” she answered, curtly. “Please don’t disturb me again. I am very tired.”

She was turning from him, when he placed his hand on her shoulder.

“Georgia, I love you. You know I do.”

The foulness of his poisoned breath filled her with loathing.

“No, Jim,” she gasped, afraid. “Oh, no!”

“Georgia, you dunno how I love you,” he pleaded, almost tearfully, taking her in his arms.

Quickly she jumped from the bed. “Where are you going?” asked the annoyed husband.

“I can’t sleep here, Jim; I can’t.” She took up her underskirt and her thin flannel dressing sack and passed from the room. She made her couch on the lounge in the front room and after a time fell asleep.

Jim twitched with nightmare throughout the night, and long after she had gone down-town in the morning.

III

AN ECONOMIC UNIT

Georgia's desk was in a rectangular room which was over one hundred feet long and half as wide. There was light on three sides. Near the ceiling was a series of little gratings, each with a small silkoline American flag in front of it. These flags were constantly fluttering, indicating forced ventilation; so that although the desks were near together and the place contained its full complement of busy people, there was plenty of oxygen for them.

This arrangement was designed primarily for economic rather than philanthropic purposes. The increased average output of work due to the fresh air yielded a satisfactory interest on the cost of the ventilating apparatus; and, besides, it impressed customers favorably and had a tendency to hold employes. The office dealt in life insurance.

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The desks were mounted on castors so that they could be wheeled out of the way at night while the tiled floor was being washed down with hose and long-handled mops and brooms and sometimes sand, as sailors holly-stone a deck. Much of the hands-and-knees scrubbing was in this way done away with.

Rubber disks hinged against the desks and set to the floor held them in place during working hours. Narrow black right-angular marks showed where each desk belonged and to what point, exactly, it must be moved back when the nightly cleaning was finished.

These details were all of profound interest to Georgia, for her desk was the most important thing in the world to her at this time in her life.

She delighted in neatness, order, precision, in the adjustment of the means to the end. Every morning just before nine, she punched the clock, which gave her a professional feeling; and hung her hat and jacket in locker 31, which seemed to her a better, a more self-respecting place for them to be than her small, untidy bedroom closet, all littered up with so many things—hers and Jim's.

Her mother, who kept house for them, was

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a good deal at loose ends, in Georgia's opinion. And it didn't seem quite the decent thing that a woman who had nothing else in the world to do should fail to keep a six-room flat in order. Of course her mother was getting a little old, but hardly too old to do that.

Georgia had lately had a trial promotion to "take" the general agent's letters—the previous functionary, a tall blonde girl, having married very well.

It was the first stenographic position in the office and carried the best salary, so there was a good deal of human jealousy about it—much the same sort as freshmen feel who are out for the class eleven.

Georgia had tried her hardest for five days. She had stayed overtime to rewrite whole pages for the sake of a single omitted letter; she had bought half a dozen severely plain shirt waists, and yielded up her puffs. Everyone knew how the old man hated the first sign of nonsense.

But in spite of all that the day before he had called in Miss Gerson to take his dictation.

Well—it was pretty hard, but she had done her best. And she *was* a better workman than

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Miss Gerson, she would stick to that. Only yesterday she had seen Miss G. twice hunting in a pocket dictionary hidden in her lap—and she never had to do that, practically.

Life was just one damn thing after another, as Jim was always complaining—only he could never possibly have apprehended the full truth and implication of that saying—in spite of its rather common way of putting it. She knew that he never saw deeply, really fundamentally into the dreadful mystery of being here; he couldn't for he was coarse and masculine and he drank.

Her fingers were working rapidly casting up purple letter after purple letter before her eyes, but the physiologists tell us that she was using only the front part of her brain for it. The rest of it was free to contemplate the Ultimate Purpose, or gross favoritism in the office especially in relation to Miss Gerson, or whether an ice cream soda was a silly thing to have before lunch, as she knew it was, but then one had to have some pleasure.

Rat-tat-tat-tat went the keys; ding, there was her bell. Ten letters more on this line said the front part of her brain. One thing

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she was sure of, said the back, she devoutly hoped her young brother Al wouldn't develop into a mere white-collared clerk—though of course she certainly wanted him to be always a gentleman. She slid her carriage for the new line.

Rat-tat-tat-tat—and again, ding. There, the end of the page. Single space and not an error. She would like to see Miss Gerson do that at her speed.

The shuffle of the old man's office boy sounded behind her. Now, wait—what would to-day's verdict be? Would he pass or stop?

"Miss Connor," a-a-ah—"the old man wants you to take some letters." (Georgia had let them suppose she was unmarried.)

The benison of perfect peace now enfolded her.

Poor little Miss Gerson—well, after all, life is a game, the loser pays, and the winner can be perfectly philosophical about it.

Georgia went to the old man's private office and closed the door behind her.

"Yes, sir." She stood at attention, pad and pencil ready.

"Will you take these please, Miss Connor? Mr. James Serviss—here's his address," the

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old man tossed the letter he was answering over to her. "Dear Sir: Replying to yours of the 16th inst., we regret that——. Well, tell him it's impossible. Write the letter yourself. You understand?" He was observing her as if to probe her resourcefulness.

"Perfectly, sir."

"Miss Belmont saved me a great deal of trouble in that way. She could tell what I would want to say." Miss Belmont was the blonde girl who had married and left a vacancy.

"I can do the same, sir."

"Well, here are some more," continued the old man. "This—No." He tossed another letter to her. She made a shorthand notation in the corner of it. "This—By all means, —and be polite about it. This—An appointment to-morrow afternoon."

"Yes, sir."

"This—Routine. And these—Send them to the proper departments." More notations.

"Yes, sir."

"You can start on those. Bring them in when they're ready."

"Yes, sir." Exit Georgia.

She summoned the deeper layers of her

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vitality, settled to her work and her fingers flew. She knew the joy—if joy it be—of creation.

Quietly she slipped back into the old man's office, without knocking. His secretary had entrance except at such times as he shut his telephone off.

She seemed very slim and neat, and calm and steady—almost prim, perhaps, as she stood with pen and blotter in her hand to take the old man's signatures.

But her being surged within her like that of a mother who waits to hear if her boy is to be expelled from school or forgiven.

The old man had been going over a campaign plan for business with one of his quickest witted solicitors, and after Georgia had waited standing for a few moments, dismissed him with, "Yes, that's the right line, Stevens. Just keep plugging along it."

As Stevens passed her on his way out he bowed slightly. He had been doing that for some time now, though he had not yet spoken to her.

Stevens was still under thirty, she concluded, though she had heard he had been with the company for ten years. A silent,

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sharp-featured, tall young fellow with chilly blue eyes, who had the name in the office of keeping himself to himself and being all business.

The old man, having glanced over and signed the letters, passed his verdict on her work—"Hmm, hmm, Miss Connor, you may move your things to Miss Belmont's desk. And here's a note——"

When an author conquers a stage manager; or Atchison rises 4½ the very next day; or the Cubs bat it out in the tenth on a darkening September afternoon; when on the third and last trial, it's a boy; or when Handsome Harry Matinee returns you his curled likeness *signed*; or you first sip Mai Wein, you know what it is to move your things to Miss Belmont's desk.

"And here's a note," continued the old man, without the gap which we have made to put in analogues, "to Mr. Edward Miles—I'd better dictate this one myself—'Dear Mr. Miles: I should be happy to have you call—' No, strike that out. 'In response to your letter of even date, I should be glad to see you at any time that suits you, here in my office—' no, make it three o'clock to-morrow

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afternoon—"to confer over the subject of the Senatorial campaign in your district." Read what you've got."

Georgia did so.

The old man changed his eyeglasses. "Maybe you'd better telephone him instead," he said. "It's Ed Miles, the politician. You can probably locate him at——"

"Yes, sir, I know," suggested Georgia.

"And get Mr. Somers on the phone—Mr. Somers does some of our legal work——"

"Yes, sir."

"And ask him to be here at the same time. Make a note of it on my list of appointments."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell him Miles is coming, and to get up a little résumé for me of the situation in those districts over there, and ah—perhaps an estimate in a general way of what we ought to do for, ah—Mr. Miles. You will indicate that to him."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, telephone him that." Georgia rose and went to the door. "Ah—Miss Connor——" She turned and looked at her employer, her head tilted forward, with a

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peculiar open-eyed, steady little stare, which was a trick of hers when wholly interested.

“Did I indicate to you,” said he, “that you are my *private* secretary now?”

“I understand, sir. Thank you.”

THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE

Each morning as Georgia entered the elevated train and spread open her paper, she cast off the centuries, being transformed from a housewife to a "modern economic unit."

She smiled at the morning cartoon or perhaps, in the celebrated phrase of Dr. Hackett, she sighed softly for the sake of its meticulous futility. Her penny to the news stand gave her full and free franchise upon the ever anxious question of the popularity of popular art. Other Georgias of Chicago were simultaneously passing like judgments in like elevated cars and the sum of their verdicts would ultimately readjust social distinctions in Cook and Lake counties, Illinois.

She always turned to the Insurance Notes next. It was her Duty to be Well-Informed and Interested in the Success of Her Employer, for His Success was Hers. She hadn't

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been to business college for eight weeks not to know that.

Next a peek at Marion Jean Delorme's column of heart throbs, which she frankly regarded as dissipation, because she enjoyed it, and everybody who read it called it common.

By this time, home and its squabbling; its everlasting question of how far a pay envelope can stretch; her sullen contemplation of Jim's alcoholism; and irritability at her mother's pottering way had vanished into the background of her mind, where they slept through her working day.

She engaged herself with more appealing problems and a larger world. She deplored the litter of torn-up streets and the thunder of the loop, instead of the litter of the breakfast dishes and the squeak of the hinge. Not that clean dishes are less meritorious than clean streets, but, to such minds as hers had grown to be, less captivating. To change desks downtown was more fun than to change chairs at home.

She felt her solidarity with the other people who streamed into the business district at eight forty-five, to get money by writ-

The Head of the House

ing or talking. It was the master's end of the game and she belonged to it. Outside-the-loop worked with its arms and hands—she worked merely with her fingers. The time might come when she would need to work only with her tongue—and triple her income. She was in line for that.

She was no mean citizen of no mean city throughout the day: at the lunch club where she coöperated; in the big white-tiled vestibule of her building where she exchanged ten words of weather prophecy with the elevator starter between clicks; in the rest room where they talked office politics, and shows, and woman suffrage, as well as beaux and hats; behind her machine which rattled “twenty dollars a week by your own ten fingers and no man's gratuity.”

There were no oaths, no bonds unbreakable, no church to tell her she couldn't change her job, as it tells the housed and covered women who get their bread by wifehood.

If she didn't like the temperature of the room, or the size of her employer's ears, she could walk across the street and do as well—perhaps better.

If he had sworn at her, or come ugly drunk

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into her presence—but that was inconceivable. Employers didn't do that, only husbands, because they knew they had you.

It was the full life and the free life which she lived, she and her sisters of the skyscrapers. It was the emancipation of woman, and the curse of Eve was lifted from them.

But the tide of her being which flowed regularly each work-morning, ebbed regularly each night. Her horizon became smaller and less bold after she had slid her nickel over the glass to the spectacled cashier in the L cage and was herded for home on the jammed platform. Her boldness continuously diminished as station after station was called and she stood to her strap, glancing from the direct imperatives, "Uneeda Union Suit and We Can Prove It," "Hasten to the House of Hoopelheimer," "Smart Set Collars for Swell Spenders," "Blemishes Blasted by Blackfeeto," to the limp, sallow people who, like herself, had left their vitality downtown.

When she pushed away from the light of her home station into the gloom and up the ineffectually lighted street between rows upon rows of three and four story flats, her head slightly bent, scurrying along with the

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working woman's nightfall pace, like Lucifer, she felt the mighty distance. She had shrunk into a middle-class wife who had been a poor picker.

So it usually happened. But the day of her triumph over Miss Gerson was an exception, and the corona of the office extended and enveloped her through the rows of flat buildings and up two flights of stairs to the door of her own apartment.

She entered happily, gaily. And there was Jim sprawled in one chair, his dusty boots in another, without a coat to hide his soiled shirt sleeves, without a collar to apologize for his unshaven chin, a frazzled cigar between his fingers and a heap of ashes beside him where he had let them fall upon the carpet—her carpet that she had earned and paid for.

Ashes had fallen, too, upon his protruding abdomen. He breathed very heavily, almost wheezed. He looked up to speak. His eyes were rather swinish in recovery from debauch. His teeth were bad and the gap which had come under the cut lip was not a scar of honor. She hoped he wouldn't speak—but of course he did.

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"Hello, Georgia."

"Hello," she answered mechanically.

"What you been doing?"

What a stupid question. What did he suppose she had been doing? For when a husband doesn't suit, he doesn't suit at all—his very attempts at peacemaking become an offense in him.

"Working," she said curtly and passed on to their bedroom.

"Oh, hell! cut out the everlasting grouch," he called after her, and went to the window and looked out, kneeling moodily on the window seat. He was Henpecko the Monk, all right. What she needed was a firm hand. Women took all the rope you gave them—they took advantage of you. He ought to have begun long ago to shut down on her nonsense. Other husbands did, and by God, he would begin. Then he rubbed his prickly chin and smiled ruefully. For hadn't he begun a great many times and had he ever been able to finish?

Besides, he was broke, and it was strictly necessary, most unfortunately in view of his present disfavor, for him to obtain a loan.

Maybe Al would help him out and he

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wouldn't have to ask Georgia. There was an idea. It was more dignified, too.

He didn't know whether Al had come in yet.

He himself had occupied a twenty-five cent seat that afternoon near Mr. Frank Schulte, most graceful of Cubs, to get a little fresh air. It did a fellow good and took his mind off home, which a fellow had to do now and then if he was going to stand it at all.

On the return trip, to be sure, he had suffered from a twinge of fans' conscience as he realized that his activities of the day had taken about fifty cents out instead of putting any cents in. A rather keen twinge, too, inasmuch as Matty had been strictly "right." There is no fun in giving up half a dollar to see the Cubs vivisected.

"Oh, Al," he called to the back of the flat.

"What?" came the call back.

"Hear about the game?"

"Nope."

"I was out," said Jim.

That ought to fetch him—and it did.

Al entered expectant. He was an extremely good-looking boy of sixteen, with pink cheeks, clear blue eyes, and a kink to his hair. He

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might have been called pretty if his shoulders were not quite so broad.

"Who win? I was north on an errand late and couldn't get a peek at an extra after the fifth." So Al apologized to his brother-in-law for his ignorance. "It was one and one then."

"The Giants win, three to two, and believe me there was a rank decision at the plate against Johnny Evers. He beefed on it proper and got chased. That's what smeared us."

"Johnny ought to learn to control himself," said Al pathetically.

"Yep. He's got too much pep—that's what's the matter with that lad."

"And all the umpires in the league have banded together against him. I heard it straight to-day. And believe me"—there was an element of mystery in the boy's voice, "there's something in it."

Jim clenched his fist and brought it down hard. "If the Cubs win out against the empires this year," he stated his proposition with a vehement brandish of his fist, "they'll be going some," but his peroration rather flattened out—"believe me."

"Yes, sir, Jim. That's no damn lie."

The Head of the House

“Say, Al, loan me a quarter?”

Unhappy pause.

All sportsmen, from polo players and tarpon fishers to Kaffirs in their kraals, like to talk it over afterwards. Al didn't want to interrupt his baseball palaver with Jim. It might last right through supper and until bedtime, as it often did when Jim stayed home.

He had a vast fund of hypotheses to tell Jim again, and some new ones. If he refused Jim the loan their interesting talk would stop. But if he granted it he would be a boob. It was certainly one dilemma.

Jim smiled and repeated his thought. “I'll do as much for you some time. Go on now.”

Georgia came in quickly and angrily. “I should think you'd be ashamed, Jim Connor, trying to do a boy.”

“Oh, so you've been rubbering, eh?” Jim sneered.

She had; but this, her weakness, was one she shared with many other women—likewise men. In petty lives are petty deeds. Downtown she did not listen, or tattle, or read other people's letters. There were more important matters to attend to.

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"I got to have a little loan," said Jim—now was his time for boldness—"to tide me over till Monday."

She was obstinately mute.

"Let me have a two-dollar bill till then?"

"No."

"One?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Nothing."

"You didn't use to be such a tightwad."

"You taught me that, too, Jim. I'll never give you another cent to drink. It isn't fair to the rest of us."

Mrs. Talbot, Georgia's mother, the hombody of the household, came in from the kitchen to say that supper was now ready and she was sick and tired of the irregularity of the family meals, which she had never been accustomed to as a girl.

"Oh, cheer up, mother. I've good news to-day—a raise."

Georgia took her pay envelope from her hand bag. "See!"

Mrs. Talbot flattened out the creases in it and read it aloud. "Georgia Connor—weekly—twenty dollars." And drew forth a won-

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derful, round, golden double eagle. Where-upon Jim let his angry passions rise.

His wife—this cold-blooded, high-and-mighty creature, with her chin in the air, refused him a loan on the very same day she was raised. It was plain viciousness. It was almost a form of perversion. Forbearance, even his, had its limits.

“Why, Georgia,” continued the mother, reading the inscription from the envelope in her hand, “how’s this, they call you ‘Miss,’ Miss Georgia Connor—weekly—twenty dollars.”

“Oh—ho,” exclaimed Jim roughly, for now he felt that it was his turn. “Passing yourself off as unmarried, eh? A little fly work—hey? If I am easy, I draw the line somewhere.”

“I was ashamed to let them know I was married and still had to work out,” she responded evenly.

That was just the way it always happened. Georgia invariably ended up with the best of it.

“Well, well, let it pass, though it’s not right. But you ought to let me have a dollar or two, considering. Why, I’ve got a right to

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some of your money. You've had plenty of mine in your time."

"For value received."

"You talk of marriage as if it was bargain and sale."

Georgia's voice, which had been thin and colorless, grew suddenly thick with the bitter memories of seven years. "It is oftentimes," she said. "Bad bargain and cheap sale."

"And now and then it's a damned high buy, too, when a man gives up his liberty for a daily panning from his wife, and his mother-in-law, and kid brother."

"If I am a kid," the boy interrupted passionately, "I've brought in more and taken out less than you the last year."

Blood called to blood, and the clan of Talbot closed around the lone Connor.

"When he had to come out of school and go to work because you couldn't keep a job!" screamed the elder lady.

"You big stiff," Al brought up the reënfacement half-crying with rage.

"You shut up or I'll—" Jim answered hoarsely, drawing back his fist in menace.

Al jumped for a light chair and swung it just off the ground, meeting the challenge.

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So standing, the two glowered at each other—Jim wishing that he was twenty years younger, Al that he was three years older.

As Georgia stood back from them hoping that she would not have to interpose physically between the two, as had happened once or twice in the past year, she felt more intensely than she ever had before that her home life was very sordid and degrading to her. This eternal jangling which seemed to run on just the same whether she took part in it or not, was the life for snarling hyenas, not for a young woman with an ambition for "getting on," for rising in the social scale.

The two males, finally impelled by a common doubt of the outcome, tacitly agreed upon verbal rather than physical violence. The raucous quarrel broke out anew. Mrs. Talbot—but you, gentle reader, undoubtedly can surmise substantially what followed. You must have friends who have family quarrels.

Finally there was a lull, after all three had had their says several times over, and were trying to think up new ones.

"Jim," said Georgia slowly and deliber-

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ately, for she felt that the hour had come, "why not make this our last quarrel?"

"That's up to you," he returned belligerently.

"By making it permanent."

"What do you mean?" answered Jim, now a trifle alarmed.

"I mean that the time has come for us to separate, for the good of all of us."

She looked straight at him, until he dropped his red and watery eyes before her strong gray ones. There was a pause, a solemn pause in that poor family.

"Children," said the older woman softly and timidly, "there is such a thing as carrying bitter words too far."

"Mother, when two people come to the situation we're in, Jim and I," for the first time there was a semblance of sympathy for the man in her voice, "then I believe the only thing they can do, and stay decent, is to separate. To go on living together when they neither like nor love each other——"

"How do you know? I never said that," Jim said humbly.

"It is not what you say that counts. We don't love each other any more; that was over

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long ago; that's the whole trouble; that's why we quarrel; that's why you drink and I'm hateful to you—and it'll get worse and worse and more degrading if we keep on. Oh, I feel no better than a woman of the streets when I——”

“Georgia,” Mrs. Talbot raised her eyes significantly, glancing at Al, to warn her daughter against letting her son know a truth.

“Oh, I have been thinking this over and over—for months,” continued the wife, “and I kept putting it off. But now I'm glad I said it and it's done.”

“The church admits of only one ground for this,” said Mrs. Talbot desperately, fighting for respectability; “do you mean that Jim has——”

“I don't know——”

“No,” Jim denied indignantly, “you can't accuse me of that anyway.”

“And I don't care.”

“You don't care?” That was a most astounding remark, clear outside his calculations. Why—wives always cared tremendously. Every man knew that.

“No, if need be I could forgive an act, but not a state of mind.”

Rebellion .

Mrs. Talbot found herself literally forced to take sides with Jim. This was an attack on all tradition, on everything that she had been taught. "Why, I never heard of such talk in my life."

But Georgia would not qualify. "Well, I think that's all." She walked to the door. "I suppose I have seemed very hard, but it was best to make the cut sharp and clean." There was no sign of relenting in the set of her mouth or in her narrowed eyes; and Jim knew it was nearly impossible to do anything with her when her nostrils grew wide like that.

"All right," he mumbled, "have it your own way."

"Try to brace up for your own sake, if you wouldn't for mine." That was her good-bye. She went from the room with Al.

The mother waited behind. "She'll think better of this by and by, Jim. I'll speak to her about it now and then," she said, "and keep you in her mind. And I'm going to the priest about it, too. It's sin she's doing. And Jim——"

"Yes?" he grieved humbly, almost crying.

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“You better go over to Father Hervey and tell him all about it.”

“Yes, I’ll do that same.”

“Well, good-bye for now—you better go to some hotel to-night,” she gave him a dollar from the purse in her bosom, “and try and get work. It’ll make your coming back easier.”

“Thanks, mother, I’ll do that same. Er—I guess I’ll go in and change my collar. That’ll be all right, won’t it?”

“Yes, Georgia’s in the dining room.”

Mrs. Talbot left him. He rubbed his knuckles slowly across his eye, his breath catching quickly. Then he spied Georgia’s hand bag. There was the trouble-money—twenty dollars, a round, golden double eagle. He opened the handbag to—well, to look at it. He spun it; he palmed it; he tossed it in the air, calling heads. It came tails. He tried it again and it came heads. That settled it. He slipped the coin into his pocket, and went out of the room. At least there was salvage in leaving one’s wife.

After supper Georgia packed up his things, every stick and stitch of them, and with the aid of Al drew them out into the hallway.

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Later in the evening a politician, one of Ed Miles', knocked at the door.

"Good evening, ma'am, I'm from the Fortieth Ward Club. I have a message for Mr. Connor. He's wanted at headquarters right away."

"He doesn't live here any more."

The politician was perplexed.

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know," answered Georgia, shutting the door.

It was not until the next morning that she discovered the loss of her money.



"He doesn't live here any more."

FOR IDLE HANDS TO DO

The old man had gone to Europe for his summer vacation, leaving Georgia secure in her place with nothing to worry about. She had no more than half work to do. Business had slackened and the whole office was in the doldrums. Life's fitful fever had abated to subnormal placidity. Even her mother's chronic indignation over trifles had been quieted by the summer's drowse.

The only interesting moments in Georgia's day were nine o'clock when she came and five o'clock when she left—noon on Saturdays. The Sundays were amazingly dull.

So was her home. Al stayed away from it from breakfast unto bedtime, with a brief interval for supper. He was engrossed in prairie league baseball for one thing. That occupied him all day Sunday and half of Saturday. Of course he couldn't play after dark,

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but whenever Georgia asked him where he was going as he bolted from the table with his cap, he answered, "Out to see some fellahs."

If she hoped that he would stay at home to-night, for he was out last night and the one before, he would explain, with as much conviction as if he offered a clinching argument, that "the fellahs" were a-calling and he must go.

She was rather put out to find herself unable to speak with the same vehemence and authority to him as she had been able to use with Jim concerning the folly and wickedness of going out after supper. For when it comes to putting fingers on a man's destiny, a wife is a more effective agency than a sister. Even in unhappy marriages husband and wife are as two circles which intersect. They have common, identical ground between them. It may not be large, but such as it is it inevitably gives them moments of oneness. Brother and sister are as two circles, whose rims just touch. They may be very near each other, but at no time are they each other.

Georgia's restlessness and discontent in-

For Idle Hands to Do

creased as the summer went on, probably because she was affecting nobody else's destiny to any calculable extent. Her young brother Al kept away, perhaps warned by a deep race instinct that sisters are not meant to affect destinies. Her old mother was a settled case already. She wouldn't change; she couldn't change; she could hardly be modified, except by the weather or the rheumatism; she would merely grow old and die. No satisfaction for a young adventurous woman in experimenting on such a soul.

It has been said that neither the woman nor the man alone is the complete human being, but the man and the woman together. This woman, Georgia, who for seven years had been completed by the addition of the masculine element, was now made incomplete. She struggled in vain to find contentment in regular hours, regular sleep, regular work and regular pay.

She had supposed for years that peace and quiet, and enough money, and never the smell of whiskey were all she wanted. And here was her subconsciousness, which she couldn't understand, making her perfectly wretched,

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though she couldn't tell why; calling insistently for another man, though she didn't in the least realize it. She only knew she was tired of being cooped up in the house evenings; she wanted to get out now and then for a change and to see people who had some ideas.

She went for a Saturday evening supper to the Kaiser Wilhelm Zweite Beer and Music Garden with a school-girl friend and her husband. This pleasure-ground was well north, out of the smoke. The night was soft and the music lovely. She was much entertained by the husband's talk, and considered that she held up her end with him very well.

The next time they invited her she spent some little time before hand, "fixing-up" for the occasion. Ribbons were put back where they used to be long ago when she first met Jim. Her hat underwent revolutionary readjustment, as the school friend made plain by heated compliments on Georgia's millinery skill.

However, the husband seemed absolutely content with its effect and Georgia's animation increased throughout the evening, calling back a long neglected flush to her cheeks and

For Idle Hands to Do

a gay pace to her bearing. She was not asked a third time, however, which did not unflatter her. It was evidence that she had not slowed down completely—that she was not finished.

Meanwhile Jim, after spreeing away his twenty dollars, had gone West.

TRIANGULATION

Mason Stevens, Sr., was a horse doctor in Rogersville, Peoria County, Illinois. He wore a gray mustache and imperial beard in tribute to that famous Chicago veterinarian who has made more race horses stand on four legs than any other man in the Mississippi Valley.

Besides horses, Mr. Stevens knew cattle, hogs, sheep, tumbler and carrier pigeons, bred-to-type poultry, and whiskey. If he hadn't carried a bottle about with him in his buggy he might be alive now.

Mason Stevens, Jr., wanted to be a real doctor, so he came up to Chicago to the Rush Medical College. After his first year, whiskey took his father, the funeral took the rest, and the young man after a brief fight gave up the vision of some day substituting "M. D." in place of "Jr." after his name.

He had been a respected boy at school, green but positive. To help him out, some of

Triangulation

his friends persuaded their fathers, uncles or other sources of supply to give "Old Mase" a chance to write their fire insurance. He took the opening. Presently his acquaintance was wide enough for him to branch out into life as well as fire. After ten years in the city he was able to go to the general agent of his company and ask for a regular salary, in addition to his commissions, on the ground that there wasn't another solicitor in the state he had to take his hat off to.

He was a highly concentrated product, like most successful countrymen in the city. He hadn't been scattered in culture. He knew no foreign languages, no art save that on calendars, no music he could not hum, no drama save very occasionally a burlesque show when he felt that he needs must see women.

He knew, if he hadn't forgotten, how to find a kingfisher's nest up a small tunnel in the river bank, or a red-winged blackbird's pendant above the swamp waters, or a butcher-bird's in a thornbush with beheaded field mice hanging from its spears. Even now, with farmer's instinct, he looked up

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quickly through the skyscrapers at a sudden shift in wind.

He lived in a rooming house and ate where he happened to be. His bureau was bare of everything save the towel across the top, his derby hat, when he was in bed, and a handful of matches. His upper drawer, usually half-pulled out, was filled not with collars and ties, but with papers relating to his business; actuaries' figures; reports from all companies, his own and his rivals'; records of "prospects" that he had brought home for evening study; rough drafts of solicitation "literature" he was getting up for the company. He usually worked at night in his shirt sleeves, his hat cocked on the back of his head, his chair tilted back against the wall under a single gas jet with a ground glass globe that diverted most of the light upward toward the ceiling.

Even after he reached the point where he could afford more expensive living, he did not change. He wore better clothes because a "front" was mere business intelligence, but otherwise his habits were within a hundred and fifty dollars of his first year.

Pleasure he regarded as the enemy, not so

Triangulation

much because of its money-cost, as because it was diverting. He didn't wish to be diverted; he wished to sell life insurance and more and more. That was as far as he went with his plans. He didn't want to get rich so as to gratify dreams, to have a beautiful wife and buy her a big house and motors. He simply wanted to get rich.

He had had no romance since he left the Rogersville High School. That one had been sweet enough for awhile, but nothing came of it. And he remembered that on account of it he had neglected his studies senior year and not graduated at the top of the class. Indeed, the object of his affection, with fitting irony, had herself achieved that distinction, which cooled his fever for her.

Mason was a great believer in the value of "bumps." When he made a failure in any enterprise, he was wont to analyze why, in order to double-guard himself against a repetition of it. None but a fool repeats a mistake. He drummed that into himself. Thus in the long run he was ready to turn every "bump" into an asset instead of a liability. It is a system of philosophy widespread in this nation, especially among country-bred

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people of Puritan tradition, strong, rugged people who believe in the supreme power of the individual will, who minimize luck and take no stock in fatalism. These are usually termed "the backbone of the American people," and though of course they know that God is everywhere and omnipotent, they likewise believe that He has appointed them His deputies, with a pretty free hand to act, in the conduct of the earth.

Mason Stevens came of this stock. And though his father was a backslider, his mother was not, and she brought him up on the saying, "Maybe this will teach you a lesson, my son, next time you think of doing so-and-so."

This shows why Mason Stevens did not fall in love with any woman, after the high school girl, until he fell most desperately in love with Georgia Connor.

He resisted love from conviction. One female ten years before had defeated his brains and his purpose by her charm. He wanted no more of that.

But he had to fight. Often enough as he walked through the long office through the double row of shirt-waisted figures bending

Triangulation

over typewriters and desks, it seemed imperative for him to know them better, to wait for one of them after office hours and ride home with her on the car.

Everything else was wiped out of him for the moment but just the question of riding home with a twelve-dollar-a-week girl. Then he would walk quickly on past the girl who absorbed his imagination, his mouth set and his brows scowling. And she would confide in her neighbor that he was crazy about himself.

Sometimes when he was at home under the gas jet with his business papers on his knee, the vision of fair women would float before him, all the most beautiful in his imaginings as he had seen them in pictures or on the stage. He might dream for an hour before remembering that he was in the world to sell life insurance and that women would hamper his single-mindedness as surely as whiskey.

Who was the man he was surest of making sign an application blank when he set out after him? The man who had a woman in his head, every time; the man with the wife, and children, which are the consequences of a wife; or one who was gibbering in a

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fool's heaven because a young girl had graciously promised to allow him to support her for the rest of her days.

So he kept away from bad women as much as he could, and from good women always.

Especially from those in the office. Their constant propinquity was a constant menace and he had known a lot of fellows to get tangled up that way, and he wouldn't—if he could help it.

But he couldn't help it after he knew Georgia. She was so useful mentally and physically, and that was what he first noticed about her. He hated slackness of any sort, especially in women, because he had trained himself to dwell on women's faults rather than on men's.

Her manners, he thought, were precisely perfect. She seemed to hit a happy medium between gushing and shyness, and to hit it in the dead center. Her teeth were white and good, and she smiled often, but not too often. She never overdid anything, and her voice was low and full. She knew what you were driving at before you half started telling her; also she could make a fresh clerk feel foolish in one minute by the clock.

Triangulation

She had the charm of perfect health. About her dark irises the whites of her eyes were very white, touched with the faintest bluish tinge from the arterial blood beneath. There was a natural lustre in her hair, uncommon among indoor people. Her steps took her straight to where she wanted to go. She made no false motions. When she looked for something in her desk, she opened the drawer where it was, not the one above or below. Her muscles, nerves and proportions were so balanced that it was difficult for her to fall into an ungraceful posture.

Considering these manifold excellent qualities, the most remarkable thing about her, he thought, was that she had not long before been invited to embellish the mansion and the motors of a millionaire. He wrote enthusiastically to his mother suggesting that it would be nice to invite her to Rogersville for a portion at least of her coming summer vacation, which brought a most unhappy smile to his mother's lips. But since he did not repeat his request, the invitation was not extended.

The first time that he knew he regarded her as a woman rather than as a workwoman

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was one afternoon when the declining sun threw its light higher and higher into the big office. A ray shone on and from her patent leather belt and into his eyes. He looked up annoyed from his work. She was sitting a few desks ahead by the window, her back toward him. Before very long the thing had fascinated him and he found himself immensely concerned with the climb of the sun up her shirt waist.

It reached her collar in a manner entirely marvelous and then precisely at the moment when he was finally to know its effect upon her hair, she lowered the shade. What luck!

The next day was cloudy. The next was Saturday and she quit at twelve, before the sun got around to her window. Monday she lowered the shade before the light got even to her shoulder. Little did she know of the repressed anguish she was so bringing to the gloomy young hustler behind her. But on Tuesday the sunlight reached her hair momentarily as she leaned back in her chair and gleamed and glittered there, a coruscation of glory for fully thirty seconds—long enough to overturn in catastrophe his thirty years and their slowly built purposes.

Triangulation

He resolved hereafter to deal primarily not in life insurance, but in life, which meant Georgia.

VII

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

During the ensuing days Mason was hopeless for work.

From the office books he found out where she lived, slyly as he supposed, but not so slyly that the information clerk didn't tell someone, who told someone who teased Georgia at the luncheon club, not thereby displeasing her. For he was a good-looking fellow and capable; furthermore, he had always kept himself to himself, so putting several noses out of joint, it was said.

He had moments of anguished self-reproach as he sat in his room in his boarding house, his chair tilted against the wall under the gas jet, his coat on his bed, his derby hat tilted back on his head.

He knew that his life had been utterly unworthy. He had drunk it to the lees, pretty near. But now he was through with all that.

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Hereafter, for her sake, he would conquer himself and others.

His sense of beauty was limited by inheritance and by disuse, but now he began to draw upon all the poetry in his soul—not to write to her, but to think of her.

His imagination, naturally fertile and strengthened by the practice of his profession, centered itself on the question of his first kiss from her—where, when and how should it happen? He called all great lovers from Romeo to Robert W. Chambers to his aid—it must be under the moon, the fragrance about them. And a lake, a little lake, for the moon to shine upon and magically increase its magic. He remembered the moon on the river back in Rogersville, with the other girl—the first one. What mere children they were. That was puppy love, but this was love; love such as no man ever felt before for a woman.

He was hard hit.

The lake suggested a train of thought, so he packed his bag on Saturday and went to southern Wisconsin. The resort dining room was full of noisy youths and maidens who, in his decided opinion had no proper rever-

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ence for love, though they seemed perfectly amorous whenever he suddenly came upon a pair of them as much as one hundred yards from the hotel.

He chartered a flatbottom after supper to row out alone and contemplate the moon and her, but the voices of the night and the frogs were overwhelmed by the detestable mandolins tinkling "My Wife's Gone to the Country, Hurray."

When finally he turned in he discovered there was a drummers' poker party on the other side of the pine partition, so it wasn't until nearly daylight he dozed off, to wake a couple of hours later when the dishes began to rattle.

The boat concessionaire reported pickerel in the lake and he joined the Sunday piscatorial posse. He returned with two croppies and the record of many bites, mostly on himself.

He concluded he wasn't interested in fishing anyway. It was just a device to cheat himself and make himself suppose he was having a good time. He couldn't have a good time and wouldn't if he could, until he knew her, until at least he knew her. Why he had never

A Sentimental Journey

said ten words to her more than "Good morning" and "Good evening." He would call on her; he had her address. He would go to her apartment and ring the bell and say, "Miss Connor, I have come to call on you. Do you mind?"

No, that would hardly do. It was too bold. He mustn't seem at all crude to her, but mannerly and suave and self-possessed. A girl, and especially one of her sort, would object to crudeness. He must be very courtly, knightly. Flowers on her desk every morning, perhaps, not a card, not a word. A handful of sweet blossoms each day to greet her and bear her silent testimony that there was one who—— She would know, of course, in due time whence they came. Not that he would ever so much as hint at his gifts, but her woman's intuition would tell her. And when she did realize in this way his silent though passionate devotion, she would thank him, gently and sadly, and a bond would be made between them.

But then, what if the other people in the office had intuition, too, or saw him bringing in flowers? No, decidedly that wouldn't do.

And then—just in time for him to catch

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the 3:40—a blinding flash of warning illumined his whole being. What if, while he was there shilly-shallying at a summer resort, some other fellow was with her in Chicago at that very moment?

“What if”—a ridiculous way to put it. Wasn’t it sure in the nature of things, that at that very moment some other man was with her?

He caught the 3:40. He would call on her that very evening and if indeed he didn’t declare himself bluntly in so many words—hadn’t he heard of numberless women who had been won at first sight?—he would at least intimate to her strongly, unmistakably, that she was the object of his respectful consideration and attention.

There were others in the field. It was time he declared himself in, too.

It wasn’t until 5:37, when the train reached Clybourn Junction, that he began to repent his precipitancy. He was going to see her again in the office to-morrow, wasn’t he? Wouldn’t it look queer if he went out to call on her to-night without warning? She might be wholly unprepared for callers and annoyed.

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But his presumable rival bobbed up again and spoiled his supper, so after dropping his bag at home, he walked presently into the entry way of 2667 Pearl Avenue. Her name was not on the left side; perhaps she had moved. No, here on the right, floor 3, in letters of glory—"Connor." Above it, "Talbot."

Who was Talbot? Married sister, roommate or landlady from whom she sublet? He raised his thumb to the bell. He had never before experienced a moment of such acute consciousness.

Wait a second—she might not be in. He walked out and looked up at the third floor right. There was certainly a light, a bright one, and the window was open and the curtain fluttering out.

Somebody was in. It might be Talbot. In that case he wouldn't go up or leave his name either. It certainly was none of Talbot's business, whoever Talbot was.

He pressed the button under her name. "Yes?" Heavens above, it was she, Georgia, the woman herself.

"Yes, who is it?" came the voice once more.

"Stevens."

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“Mr. Stevens?” with a decided tone of interrogation. Evidently she did not place him at all. Probably not, with so many other men about her. It would be absurd to suppose anything else. She didn’t place him—might not even recognize him out of the office.

“Mason Stevens of the office.”

“Oh, Mr. Stevens of the office. How do you do?” and she spoke with a delightful access of cordiality. “Will you come up?”

“Just for a minute, if I may. I won’t keep you long.”

“Wait, I’ll let you in.” The click-click-click sounded and he was on his way upstairs. She opened the door for him.

A quick glance. There was no other man in the room, anyway.

“Good evening,” she said. “Won’t you come in?”

“Why, yes,” then very apologetically; “that is, if I’m not putting you out.”

“No, indeed.” He sat and paused. She smiled and did not help him.

“You’re nicely located here, Miss Connor.”

“Oh, yes, we like it.”

“Near the express station?”

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"Yes. I usually get a seat in the morning, but not coming back, of course."

"About three blocks, isn't it?"

"Three long ones."

"A nice walk."

"Yes, this time of year, but not so nice in winter when they don't clean the snow off the sidewalks."

He felt that it was a bit jerky. Perhaps he should first have asked her permission to call. What a goat he was not to think of that beforehand instead of now. He paused until the pause grew uncomfortable.

She tried to help him out, "We're out of the smoke belt, that's one thing."

He was seated in a rocking chair and began to rock violently, then suddenly he stopped and leaned toward her, his elbows on his knees.

"I've been slow getting to the point," he remarked abruptly, "but I came here on business."

"Oh, I wasn't just sure what."

Stevens took half a dozen life insurance advertising folders from his pocket. "You know this literature we're using," he said, running two or three through his fingers and

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indicating them by their titles, “ ‘Do You Want Your Wife to Want When She’s a Widow?’ ‘Friendship for the Fatherless,’ ‘Death’s Dice Are Loaded.’ ”

“Oh, yes.” She took them from him and read aloud. “ ‘Over the Hills to the Poorhouse,’ with a photograph of it, ‘Will *Your* Little Girl Have to Scrub?’ with thumbnail pictures of scrub ladies. Ugh, what a gloomy trade we’re in, aren’t we, Mr. Stevens?”

“This is the line of talk that gets the business.” He spoke earnestly, tapping the folders. “You can’t make papa dig up premiums for forty or fifty years unless you first scare him and scare him blue about his family.”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

! “And what I came for is—well, will you—would you just as soon help me get up some more of these?”

“You mean work with you on them?” She was truly surprised.

“Exactly.”

She hesitated and then she said it was impossible, but that she appreciated his kind compliment, was flattered by it and thanked him deeply, deeply. For, of course, she realized that Mr. Stevens was one of the very

A Sentimental Journey

best men in town at that sort of work and she was afraid she couldn't possibly be of any real use to him.

"Not at all, not at all;" he was talking business now and waved aside her objections with his customary confidence. Everybody always objected to his plans for them when he began talking, but in the end he was apt to change their minds. That was why he was considered a premier solicitor. "You've a clear head and a good ear for words, that's what's needed, and——"

"But——" she tried to interrupt.

"And ideas, that's the point, ideas. You're clever."

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't think so; I know."

"I'm flattered," she said firmly. "But no—really."

"Well, I won't take that for a definite answer yet." Of course not. He never did. "I want you to think it over. I have the utmost confidence in the scheme and your ability to carry it out. You can tell me Monday in the office what you decide."

"I can tell you now, Mr. Stevens."

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He rose. "Think it over anyway. You may change your mind."

She rose, too, not encouraging him to stay.

"Miss Connor," he spoke gravely, "there was something else I came to ask you. I'd like to know you personally as well as in a business way, if you'd just as soon. May I come to see you now and then?"

She did not answer. She saw that it counted with him. He seemed really to care. She must not be brusque with him. He must not think her merely light-minded, unappreciative of the compliment of his interest. She must tell him of her marriage.

"Of course, if you'd rather not for any reason, why, that settles it," there was a check in his voice, "and we'll say no more about it." Still she did not answer. He held out his hand. "Well, good-bye, then."

"Good-bye."

He went to the door and opened it.

"Mr. Stevens."

"Yes, Miss Connor."

"I think you ought to know that isn't my name."

"What is it, then?"

"Mrs. Connor."

A Sentimental Journey

“Mrs. Connor? *Missis* Connor?”

“Yes.”

He came down into the room. His glance traveled rapidly to the four corners, like a wild animal dodging men and dogs. He had one question left, one chance of escape.

“Are you a widow?” he said.

“No, a married woman.”

Stevens went slowly out of the door without replying. The woman whom he loved belonged to another man. It was like the end of the world.

VIII

THE LIFE FORCE

If Mason had been in the *jeunesse dorée* he must now have gone to Monte Carlo to buck the tiger or to India to shoot him.

As it was, he smoked all night and turned up at the office half an hour ahead of time in a voluble, erratic mood, brought about by suppressing so much excitement within himself. If he had known how to tell his troubles to a friend over a glass of beer he might have had an easier time of it in his life. But he wasn't that sort. He took things hard and kept them in.

He decided that the best thing to do with his sentiment for Georgia was to strangle it. Whenever he caught himself thinking of her, which would certainly be often at first, he must turn his mind away. He must avoid seeing her; if they met accidentally he would give no further sign than a curt nod.

The Life Force

He remembered the farmers used to say that there was one thing to do with Canada thistles—keep them under, never let the sun shine on them. His love for this other man's wife was like a thistle. He must keep it under, never let the sun shine on it.

He did it thoroughly. He nodded to her in the most indifferent way in the world when they happened to meet, but he found no occasion to stop at her desk to chat an instant. Two weeks of his change of manner began to pique her. He was acting in a rather absurd way, she thought. After all they weren't lovers who had quarreled, but simply acquaintances, friends after a fashion, fellow workers. Why shouldn't they continue to be friends? It would be amusing to have some one besides the family and the girls to talk to.

She would not let him treat her in this stiff way any longer, just because she had had the bad luck to marry a bad man years before. What rubbish that was. And what self-consciousness on his part. Men had a very guilty way of looking at things.

They met quite or almost quite by accident in front of the office building during the noon

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hour of the following day. He was about to pass without stopping.

"How do you do, Mr. Stevens?" Her voice was quite distinct.

So he turned and lifted his hat. "How do you do?"

She did not precisely move toward him, but she did so contrive the pause that it was up to him, if he weren't to be boorish, to stop for a moment and speak with her.

She threw a disarming candor into her first question. "Is there any particular reason," said she, "why we are no longer friends?"

"Friends?"

"Yes. You've been frowning at me for about three weeks and I haven't the least idea how I've offended you."

He did not answer immediately and his expression hardened.

"There, you're doing it now," said she with apparent perplexity. "Why?"

"You know," he spoke doggedly.

"No, I don't."

"Yes you do, too," he answered curtly and roughly. "You do."

"Just as you please." She turned from him, apparently offended by his tone, slightly

The Life Force

nodded and walked slowly away. She was of medium height, no more than that, and slender. A brute of a man bumped her with his shoulder as he passed her.

Stevens waited for the brute of a man, dug his elbow into his ribs and overtook her at the Madison Street corner.

"Miss—Mrs. Connor, I didn't mean to be rude."

"You were a little, you know."

"Will you excuse me?"

"Why, of course."

He didn't quite know what to do next, so he awkwardly extended his hand. She took it with a man-to-man shake of wiping out the score, which completely demolished his cynical attitude in reference to platonic friendship.

"Where were you bound for?" he asked.

"Nowhere, just strolling. Over to the lake front for a breath of air."

"May I walk along?"

"Surely."

On their way back they reflected that they had been without lunch, so they stopped at a drug store for a malted milk with egg, chocolate flavor, nutmeg on top.

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They touched their glasses together.

“It’s very nourishing,” said he with wonderment.

“Very,” she replied, delightedly; “very.”

They returned to their work in that state of high elation induced by interviews such as theirs, wherein the spoken words mean twenty times what they say—and more.

IX

THE PRETENDERS

Georgia and Mason did not overpass the outward signs and boundaries of platonism, learning to avoid not merely evil, but the appearance of evil. When they met in the hundred-eyed office they were casual.

During the autumn they took long walks together every Sunday. There had been a dry spell that year, lasting with hardly a break from the fore part of June, which baked the land and sucked out the wells and put the Northern woods in danger of their lives. The broad corn leaves withered yellow and the husbandmen of the great valley protested that the ears were but "lil' nubbins with three inches of nuthin' at the tips, taper-in' down to a point, and where'll we get our seed next spring?"

When the huge downpour came at last and by its miracle saved the crop which had been given up for lost a fortnight since,

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Mason cursed the day, for it fell on the first day of the week and cost him, item, one walk and talk with Georgia Connor. She stood so near his eyes as to hide from his sight a billion bushels parching in the valley—though he was country bred.

To her their Sundays together brought not a joy as definite as his, but rather a sense of contentment, of relief from the precision of the other days of her week. It pleased her to wander to the big aviary and look at the condors and cockatoos and wonder about South America where they came from, then to stroll slowly over to the animals and have a vague difference of opinion with him about whether a lion could whip a tiger.

She thought so because the lion was the king of beasts, but Mason didn't, because he'd read of a fight where it had been tried. Once he even grew a trifle heated because she wouldn't listen to reason and fact and stuck to the lion because he'd been called the king of beasts, whereas all naturalists knew the elephant and the gorilla and the rhinoc— There she interrupted him with a laugh and called him a boy and too literal.

Every Sunday they had this same dispute

The Pretenders

until finally they both learned to laugh about it and made it a joke between them, and she told him he was doing much better. They walked by the inside lake and wondered if the wild ducks and geese on the wooded isle liked to have to stay there, and they took lunch when they got good and ready, perhaps not until two or three or even four o'clock in the afternoon.

She always went home for supper, but often she came out again afterwards, and took the car down town to a Sunday Evening Ethical Society which foregathered in an old-fashioned theatre building.

There was almost always some well-known speaker whose name was often in the papers, perhaps a professor or a radical Ohio Mayor or a labor lawyer, to address them on up-to-date topics like Municipal Ownership in Europe or the Russian Revolution or the Androcentric World, which showed women had as much right to vote as men, or non-resistance, a kind of Christianity that wasn't practical. Stevens didn't like that lecture much.

Jane Addams spoke once about the children that lived in her neighborhood. He

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thought her talk the best of all; so did Georgia. He said to her that Jane Addams was as much of a saint as any of those old-timers that were burnt and pulled to pieces and fed to lions, and a useful kind of a saint as well, because she helped children instead of just believing in something or other. Georgia didn't answer his remark at the time, but nearly half an hour later as she was bidding him good night she had him repeat it to her, and the next day she told him that what he had said about Miss Addams was very interesting.

They had organ music at these meetings and a collection, so that he felt it was the next thing to going to church. But Georgia in arguing out the matter with herself concluded that there was so little religion in the services that in attending them she violated the Church's law against worshiping with heretics hardly more than if she went to a political meeting. She would never go to a regular Protestant service with Mason, even if he asked her. She made up her mind firmly on that point. So perhaps it was as well he didn't ask her.

Her waking memories of Jim were now

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much fainter and dimmer. She tried not to think of him at all. She refused to let her mother or Al speak his name or make allusion to him. At the beginning, just after his departure, mama had harped on the subject until she thought it would drive her crazy.

Over and over and over again she traversed the same ground—about his being her husband, and Christian charity, and one more trial, and the disgrace of it, and that it was the first time such a thing ever happened in the family.

Finally in self-defense and to save herself from being upset every night when she was tired and worn out anyway, she told her mother that the next time she mentioned Jim's name she would leave the room. And she only had actually to do this three times before poor mama succumbed, as she always did when she was met firmly. However, she still managed to say a volume in Jim's favor with her deep sighs and her "Oh, Georgia's," but Georgia always pretended she didn't know the meaning of such signs and manifestations. Of course, especially at the beginning, her husband's face often came

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unbidden between her and her page, but she gathered up her will each time to banish it again, and it's surprising what a woman can do if she only makes up her mind and *sticks to it*.

But her dreams were the trouble. Jim would enter them. She didn't know how to keep him out. And he always came, sometimes two or three nights in succession, to bring her pain.

She usually appointed her Sunday rendezvous for an hour before noon at Shakespeare's statue in the Park, and sailed off cheerily in her best bib and tucker to meet Mason, leaving behind her a fine trail of excuses, a complete new set each week, to explain to mama why she couldn't go to mass. On this particular morning she said she had a date with a girl-friend from the office.

With the best intention in the world she was never on time and always kept him waiting. She was so unalterably punctual for six days a week that the seventh day it was simply impossible.

Stevens usually became slightly irritated during these few minutes—what business man wouldn't?—and referred to his watch

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at hundred-second intervals, determined to ask her once and for all why she wasted so much time in tardiness. But when finally he distinguished her slim little figure in the Sunday throng that was streaming toward him, his impatience left not a wrack behind.

They started gayly northward, bantering each other in urban repartee. As they passed gray Columbus Hospital their mood swerved suddenly and they talked of sickness and death and immortality.

Her belief was orthodox, but it did not hold her as vividly as it held the old folk in the old days. Had she lived nearer to the miracles of the sun going down in darkness and coming up in light; or thunderstorms and young oats springing green out of black, with wild mustard interspersed among them like deeds of sin; of the frost coming out of the ground; and the leaves dying and the trees sleeping; she would perhaps have lived nearer to the miracles of bread and wine, of Christ sleeping that the world may wake.

But she lived in a place of obvious cause and effect. When the sun went down, the footlights came up for you if you had a ticket, and man's miracle banished God's

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even though you might be in the flying balcony and the tenor almost a block away. Thunderstorms meant that it was reckless to telephone; oats, wheat and corn, something they controlled on the board of trade; the melting of the snows showed the city hall was weak on the sewer side—what else could you expect of politicians?—the dying leaves presaged the end of the Riverview season and young Al's excitement over the world's series.

Living in the country puts a God in one's thoughts, for man did not make the country and its changes, yet they are there. Farmers pray for rain or its cessation according to their needs. To live in the city is to diminish God and the seeming daily want of Him, for man built his own city of steel and steam and stone, unhelped, did he not?

God may have made the pansies, but He did not make "the loop." His majesty is hidden from its people by their self-sufficing skill, and they turn their faces from Him. West-siders do not pray for universal transfers.

Never had Georgia questioned her faith. Its extent remained as great as ever. She

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had consciously yielded no part of her creed. But its living quality was infected by the daily realism of her life, as spring ice is honeycombed throughout with tiny fissures before its final sudden disappearance.

So she talked to Stevens of her convictions, but in a calm dispassionate way, without emotional fervor.

Stevens' great-grandparents whenever they referred to the Romanist Church, which was often, spoke of "the scarlet woman" or "the whore of Babylon." His grandparents, products of a softer, weaker generation, stopped at adjectives, "papist," "Jesuitical," "idolatrous."

His parents receded still further from the traditions of the Pilgrims. Indeed his father, being a popular horse doctor, kept his mouth shut altogether on the subject, and his mother seldom went beyond remarking that there was considerable superstition in the Catholic service and too much form to suit her.

As for the son himself, he could as soon have quarreled about the rights and wrongs of the Mexican war as he would about religion. He wasn't especially interested in either. He thought there was a lot of flim-

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flam for women in all religion, especially in Catholicism. But it was an amiable weakness of the sex, like corsets. So he let Georgia run on, explaining her faith, without interruption.

Then most wretched luck befell them. Georgia looked up from the tips of her toes, being vaguely engaged, as she talked, in stepping on each large pebble in the gravel path and her eyes rested squarely upon her mother. Mrs. Talbot mottled; Georgia blushed.

All progress was temporarily arrested; then the older woman puffed out her chest and waddled away with all the dignity at her summons. But she could not resist the Parthian shot—what Celt can?—and she turned to throw back over her shoulder, “Who’s your girl-friend, Georgia?” Her teeth clicked and she continued her departure.

Stevens realized that there had been a contretemps of some sort and that it was his place, as a man of the world, to laugh it off.

“Who’s the old pouter pigeon?” he inquired.

“Mama.”

“Oh!”

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Feeling that candor was now thrust upon her, Georgia proceeded to explain to Stevens that she had never explained about him to her mother, for mama couldn't possibly understand, being old-fashioned and prejudiced in some regards.

"So you've made me fib for you," she finished. "Aren't you ashamed?"

"Yes," said he, in truth much gratified by her clandestineness.

"But what I don't see is——," he began, then broke off.

"Is what?"

"Is why you should be so disturbed about your *mother's* knowing,"

"I've told you—for the sake of peace and a quiet life."

"But what about your husband?" He blurted it out suddenly, the word which had crucified him since his one and only visit to her home; the word which he had kept dumb between them until now. "What about him? Doesn't he mind?"

"He left me six months ago. You never supposed I would take a man's bread and—fool him, did you, Mason?" She called him by his name for the first time.

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"I didn't know," he muttered, "I've been to hell and back thinking of it."

"How did you suppose it would come out?" she asked, fascinated objectively by the drama of her life.

"I felt we were playing bean-bag with dynamite—and we ought to quit—made up my mind—while I was waiting for you this morning to tell you this must be the last time, because we were drifting straight into ——" He paused.

"Into what?" There was a touch of gentlest irony in her tone.

"Into trouble, lots of it." There was a touch of apology in his.

"And you didn't want trouble, lots of it?" Her irony was not less. "At least not on my account?"

"I was thinking of what would be best for all of us. I was trying to do the square thing—the greatest happiness for the greatest number." There was a pause, unsympathetic. "Wasn't that right?" he ended with no great confidence.

"Why, of course, perfectly right," she assented heartily. "It shows consideration. You considered the case systematically from

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all sides. Yours, and mine, and my husband's, and the rest of the family's, and the rest of yours, too, I suppose, didn't you?" She looked extremely efficient and spoke in her business voice with a little snap to her words.

She was quite unfair in taking this tack with unhappy Stevens, who, however often he thought of his duty in these twisted premises, would surely not have done it if she beckoned him away. For she owned the only two hands in the world which he wanted to hold.

A woman, however, prefers to be the custodian of her own morals and it gratifies her at most no more than slightly to find that her lover has been plotting with himself to preserve her virtue. It is for the man to ask and for her to deny, sadly but sweetly—and she doesn't care to be anticipated. Especially when she is self-perceptibly interested.

"But since you are already separated from ——"

"Yes, that makes it pleasanter all around, doesn't it?" she led him on most treacherously.

"Why, of course—that's what I was say-

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ing," he blundered. "Now I can ask you to ——"

"Mason, I've a frightful headache, the sun perhaps—and I think I will go home and lie down, if you don't mind."

He looked up in some amazement at the lord of day half hidden by the haze in his November station, and it suddenly occurred to him that woman is a various and mutable proposition always.

"What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"Nothing," she responded with deliberate unconvincingness, "nothing in the world, but a headache." She held out her hand. "Don't bother to come with me. We might be seen. Good-bye." And she was off.

It was a winding gravel path and she was lost behind a curving hedge before he started in pursuit. She quickened her pace when she heard his step behind and it was almost a walking race before he overtook her.

"Georgia," he exclaimed, somewhat ruffled by her unreasonableness. She neither turned her head nor answered.

"Georgia!" he repeated more loudly. Then he took her wrist and forcibly arrested her.

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"Please let me go," she requested with supreme dignity, "you are hurting me."

"Not until you hear what I have to say. Will you marry me?"

"Marry you?" She dropped her eyes before his frowning ones. The shoulders which had been thrown so squarely back seemed to yield like her will and drooped forward into softer lines.

"Yes," he tightened his hold on her wrist, "will you?"

"I am a Catholic."

"But isn't there some way around that?" Your man of business believes there is some way around everything.

"No. Divorce and remarriage aren't permitted to us."

"Don't they ever annul a marriage?"

"Not if it has been marriage." A look of misery came over his face. She perceived it and went steadily on. "I had a child once—that died."

He dropped her hand, unconsciously to himself, but she felt it as a clear signal between them.

"You see how little you have known me,"

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she said softly. "Poor old fellow, I'm sorry. Too bad it had to end like this." Her eyes were now swimming in tears which she did not try to conceal. "Don't you see, dear, that is why I kept putting off telling you things about my affairs, and why I had tried to keep it—friendship, because I knew when we came as far as this we would have to stop."

"It will never stop," he said tensely, "never."

Response seemed to sweep through her suddenly, bewildering her by its unexpected strength.

"Perhaps not," she assented slowly, "if—if we—dare."

"Georgia," he pleaded, "you know that I ——"

"Yes," in a whisper, "I know."

"And do you care, too?"

She looked up, and her answer was plain for him to read.

"More than you will ever know, Mason," she said.

"Georgia, are you a devout Catholic? Does it mean all of life to you here and hereafter?"

"No, not very devout. Nothing like mother,

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for instance. I have grown very careless about some things."

"Would you always be governed by the teaching of the Church in this matter—always—never decide for yourself?"

"When it came to such a big thing," she said slowly, "I don't think I'd dare disobey."

"What are you afraid of—future punishment?"

"Why, yes, partly that," she smiled; "it isn't a very jolly prospect, you know."

He was truly astonished. He supposed that everybody nowadays, even Catholics, had tacitly agreed to give up hell. Hell was too ridiculously unreasonable to be believed in any more.

"Georgia," he asked, "have you ever looked much at the stars?"

"Why, yes; once in awhile. Last Sunday evening at Bismarck Garden Al and I found the dipper—it was just as plain—is that what you mean? Of course I don't pretend to be much of an astronomer."

"Some nights," he said, "when it's clear I go up on the roof and lie on my back, and,

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well, it's a great course in personal modesty. Some of those stars, those little points of light, are as much bigger than our whole world as an elephant is bigger than a mosquito, and live as much longer."

"Of course," she answered, "we know that everything is bigger than people used to think, but still couldn't God have made it all, just the same?"

"Do you honestly believe," he rejoined, speaking very earnestly, intent on shaking her faith, if that were possible, "that Whoever or Whatever was big enough to put the stars in the sky is small enough to take revenge forever on a tiny little molecule like you—or me? Do you honestly suppose that after you are dead, perhaps a long time dead, this mighty God will hunt for you through all the heavens, and when he has found you, you poor little atom of a dead dot, that he will torment and pester you forever and ever because you had once for a space no longer than the wink of an eye acted according to the nature he gave you? If that is your God, he has put nothing in his universe as cruel as Himself."

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She frowned in a puzzled way for a few seconds, looking at him with an odd little wide-eyed stare, then shook her head slowly.

‘Yes,’ said he in answer. ‘Some day you will take your life in your own hands and use it. You’re not the stuff they make nuns out of. There’s too much vitality in you.’

‘How old are you?’ he asked suddenly.

‘Twenty-six.’

‘Twenty-six and ready to quit? I don’t believe it.’

‘You don’t understand, Mason,’ she answered, ‘you can’t. You’re not a Catholic. Catholicism is different from all other creeds. It is not just something you think and argue about, but it has you—you belong to it; it is as much a part of you as your blood and bones.’ There was a finality in her voice, a resignation of self, which bespoke the vast accumulated will of the Church operating upon and through her.

Stevens knew suddenly that she was not an individualized woman in the same sense that he was an individualized man, with the private possibility of doing what he pleased so long as he did not interfere with the pri-

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vate possibilities of others; he realized that in certain important intimate matters such as the one which had arisen between them she was without power of decision, the decision having been made for her many centuries ago; and he felt the awe which comes to every man when first he is confronted by the Roman Catholic Church.

“You mean there is no way out of it—but death?—your husband’s death?” His self-confidence seemed to have departed as if he, too, had met fate in the road.

“Yes,” she answered gently, “that is the only way.” And then she smiled with some little effort, but still she smiled, for she detested gloom on her day off. “Oh, Mason,” said she, “why wasn’t grandpa a Swede?”

He looked at her with amazement and not without a trace of disapprobation, for her eyes were dancing. Was she actually making jokes about his misery—to say nothing of hers—if indeed she felt any? He was learning more about women every minute.

Now she was practically giggling. He frowned deeper and sighed. Perhaps, perhaps everything was for the best, after all. He might as well tell her so, too. No reason

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to make himself wretched for something she seemed to think hilariously humorous.

“Well, Georgia, I must say,” he began portentously—’twas the voice of the husband—almost. She could hear him complain. Whereat she simply threw back her head and laughed again.

He noticed, as he had often noticed, that her strong little teeth were white and regular, that her positive little nose was straight and slender, and the laughter creases about her eyes reminded him of the time she thought it such fun to be caught in Ravinia Park in the rain without an umbrella.

So presently he tempered his frown, then put it away altogether, and his eyes twinkled and he turned the corners of his mouth up instead of down.

“Oh, dear me,” he mocked, half in fun and half not, “as the fellow says, ‘we can’t live with ’em and we can’t live without ’em.’ ”

But she, who had been reading him like a book in plain print, asked, “Come, tell aunty your idea of a jolly Sunday in the park with your best girl. To sit her on a bench and make her listen while you mourn for the universe?”

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“But what are we going to do about it?” he asked solemnly, “that’s what I want to know.”

“Do?” she responded with a certain gay definiteness, “do nothing.”

“You mean not see each other any more at all?” he asked desperately. “I absolutely refuse.”

“No, silly, of course I don’t mean that. We’ll go on just as before, friends, comrades, pals.”

“When we love each other—when we’ve told each other we love each other?”

“Certainly. What’s that got to do with it?”

“It would be the merest pretense,” he declared solemnly.

“Then let’s begin the pretense now, and go up and throw a peanut at the elephant. Come along.” She hooked her arm into his. Her levity of behavior undoubtedly got past him at times.

“Georgia”—he was once more on the verge of remonstrance —“if you cared as you say you do, if you *loved* me as I l——”

She unhooked her arm and now she was serious enough.

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“Don’t you understand,” she said, “what I mean? We can’t talk about that any more.”

“You mean not at all?”

“Precisely.”

“But what if I can’t conceal the most important thing in my whole life? What if I can’t smirk and smile about it? What if I am not as good an actor as you? What if I can’t pretend? What then?” He was very, very fierce with her.

“Then I suppose I’ll have to go home.” They stood irresolute, facing each other, neither wishing to carry it too far.

“Not that that would be much fun—— Oh, come, don’t be silly—let’s go attack the elephant. What must be, must be, you know.”

She paused to allow him time to yield with grieved dignity, then she headed for the animal house; he trailed in silence about half a step behind her during the first hundred yards, but finally sighed and surrendered and then fell into step and pretended during the rest of the afternoon with quite decent success.

So his education began. And though he was by no means pliable material, she man-

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aged, being vastly the more expert, to keep him pretending with hardly a lapse throughout the winter.

She found it more difficult, however, to keep herself pretending.

MOXEY

Moxey was a Jew boy and a catcher. His last name ended in *sky*, and he came from the West-side ghetto. His father and mother came from the pale in Russia when Moxey's elder brother Steve was in arms and before Moxey himself appeared.

Moxey would have been captain of the Prairie View Semi-Pro. B. B. Club, if merit ruled the world. But there was the crime of nineteen centuries ago against him, so they made McClaughrey captain; Georgia's sixteen-year-old brother Al played third base.

The Prairie Views had one triumph in the morning, it being Sunday, the day for two and sometimes three games. They had the use of one of the diamonds on a public playground from Donovan, the wise cop.

I have seen Donovan keep peace and order among eighteen warring lads from sixteen to twenty years old by a couple of looks, a

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smile and a silence. When there was money on the game, too.

There has been good material wasted in Donovan. Properly environed and taught the language, though he doesn't depend on language very much, he could have been presiding officer of the French Chamber of Deputies—and presided.

It was the ninth inning, last half, tie score, two out, three on, with two and three on the batter. In other words, the precise moment when the fictionist is allowed to step in. Moxey up.

He fouled off a couple, the coaches screeched; the umpire, who was also stakeholder, dripped a bit freer and hoped Donovan would stick around for a few seconds longer.

The pitcher took a short wind-up and the ball, which seemed to start for the platter, reached Moxey in the neighborhood of the heart. He collapsed. They rallied round the umpire.

“He done it on purpose—the sheeny—he done it on purpose, I tell you—he run into it ——”

“Naw, ye’re a liar!”

Moxey

“Prove it.”

“It’s a dead ball—take your base—come in there, youse,” waving to the man on third.

“We win. Give us our money.”

All participated but Moxey, who lay moaning on the ground by the home plate.

Donovan strolled out to the debate and smiled his magic smile. “Take yer base,” bawled the emboldened ump, and waved the run in. Al got five dollars for the day’s playing and three dollars for the day’s betting, and the Prairie Views walked off, bats conspicuous on shoulders, yelling, “Yah!” at the enemy.

“Chee,” said Moxey to his playmates when they reached the family entrance, “me for the big irrigation,” And it was so.

Moxey shifted his foot, called his little circle around him close and then inserted his dark, fleshless talon into his baseball shirt. “That gave me an awful wallop what win the game,” he said; “if I hadn’t slipped me little pad in after the eight’, it might a’ put me away, understand.” He took out his protection against dead balls, an ingenious and inconspicuous felt arrangement to be worn under the left arm by right-handed batters.

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And all present felt again that there had been injustice in the preference of McClaughrey.

Whenever they asked Moxey where he lived, he answered, "West," and let it go at that. He always turned up for the next game, no matter how often plans had been changed since he had last seen any of them. That was all they knew about him. He caught for them, often won for them, drank beer with them and then disappeared completely until the next half-holiday.

Perhaps Al was his most intimate friend, and Al was the only one who learned his secret. "Say, Al," he blurted out almost fiercely one evening, "your folks is Irish, ain't they?"

"Irish-American," corrected Al.

"Well, mine's Yiddishers, and the most Yiddish Yiddishers y'ever see."

Moxey seemed very bitter about it and Al waited for more.

"My old man, well ——" Moxey swallowed. It seemed to Al as if he would not go on, but finally it came out with a rush. "He pushes a cart—yes, sir—honest to God, he pushes a cart—I thought maybe I ought to tell you, Al."

Moxey

“He does?” It was a shock to the Irish-American, which showed in his tone.

“Yes, sir, he does,” Moxey answered defiantly, “and if you don’t like it—why—well, I won’t say nuthin’ ugly to you, Al—you’re only like the rest. S’long.”

Al threw his arm around the other’s shoulder. “Forget it, Moxey.” Which was the only oath ever taken in this particular David and Jonathan affair.

Not long afterwards, Moxey proposed to Al attendance at a prizefight just across the State line, the Illinois laws being unfavorable to such exhibitions of manly skill or brutality, whichever it is. It was Al’s first fight.

They boarded a special train, filled with coarse men bent upon coarse pleasure. But then, if they had been bent upon refined pleasure they wouldn’t have been coarse or it wouldn’t have been pleasure.

The prizefighting question illustrates well the gulf between the social and the individual conscience and demonstrates that the whole is sometimes considerably greater than the sum of its parts. Probably eight out of ten men in this country enjoy seeing two hearty young micks belt each other around a padded

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ring with padded gloves. But they hesitate to come out in the open and proclaim their enjoyment, for fear of writing themselves down brutes, and the deepest yearning of the American people at the present day is to be gentlemanly and ladylike.

So whenever sparring matches are proposed the community works itself up into a state of fake indignation. All the softer and sweeter elements telegraph the Governor and if that isn't enough, pray for him; and inasmuch as the Governor gets no immoral support on the other side from those who are afraid of jeopardizing their gentlemanliness, he yields, and appears in the newspapers as a strong man who dared beard the sports, whereas, he was really a frightened politician who didn't dare beard the Christian Endeavorers.

One of the most illuminating essays of the late and great William James concerned Chautauqua Lake. He spent a week at that beautiful camp, where sobriety and industry, intelligence and goodness, orderliness and ideality, prosperity and cheerfulness pervade the air.

There were popular lectures by popular

Moxey

lecturers, a chorus of seven hundred voices, kindergartens, secondary schools, every sort of refined athletics, and perpetually running soda fountains.

There was neither zymotic disease, poverty, drunkenness, crime or police.

There was culture, kindness, cheapness, equality, in short what mankind has been striving for under the name of civilization, a foretaste of what human society might be, were it all in the light, with no suffering and no dark corners.

And yet when he left the camp he quotes himself as saying to himself: "Ouf! What a relief. Now for something primordial to set the balance straight again. This order is too tame, this culture too second-rate, this goodness too uninteresting. This human drama without a villain or a pang; this community so refined that ice cream soda is the utmost offering it can make to the brute animal in man; this city simmering in the tepid lake-side sun; this atrocious harmlessness of all things—I cannot abide with them."

But whether he could or not, the rest of us have to, and the country moves Chautauqua-ward with decorous haste. From anti-can-

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teen and anti-racing to anti-fights and anti-tights, the aunties seem to have it, the aunties have it, and the bill is passed.

Al viewed this national tendency with mixed feelings; with joy when he tasted forbidden fruit and sneaked off across the state line with Moxey in a special train full of bartenders and policemen off duty and gay brokers and butchers to see more than the law allowed; with sorrow when he considered the future of his country, as a gray, flat and feminine plain.

The preliminaries had been fought off; there was the customary nervous pause before the wind-up. Young men with official caps forced their ways between the packed crowds with "peanuts, ham sandwiches and cold bottled beer." The announcer, a tall young man in shirt sleeves, who looked as if he might be a fairly useful citizen himself in case of a difference, made the customary appeal.

"Gen-tul-men, on account of the smoke in the at-mos-phere, I am requested to request you to quit smoking." (Pause.) "The box-ers find it difficult to box in this at-mos-phere, and you will wit-ness a better encounter if

Moxey

you do.” (Applause, but no snuffing of torches.)

“The final contest of this evening’s proceedings,” called the announcer, first to one side of the ring, then to the other, “will be between Johnny Fiteon and Kid O’Mara, both of Chicago, *fer th’ bantamweight championship o’ th’ world.*”

Handclappings and whistlings. But the announcer, being gifted with the dramatic instinct, knew how to work up his climaxes, which, so far as he personally was concerned, would culminate with the tap of the gong for the first round. It was his affair to have the house seething with excitement when that gong tapped.

“Gen-tul-men,” continued the announcer; then he spied two plumes waving in the middle distance and made the amend, to delighted sniggers: ‘Ladees and gen-tul-men, I take pleasure in in-ter-duc-ing Runt Keough of Phil-ur-del-fy-a.’” A diminutive youth with a wise face stepped in the ring and bobbed his head to the cheers, and muttered something to the announcer. “Runt Keough hereby challenges the winner of this bout, for the championship of th’ world in the 115-

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poung class, *to a finish.*” A tumult ensued. The Runt backed out of the ring to hoots of “fourflusher” and howls of approbation.

“Ladees and gen-tul-men, I now take pleasure in in-ter-duc-ing to you Mr. Ed Fiteon, father and handler of Johnny Fiteon, who wears th’ bantamweight crown *o’ th’ world.*”

The crowd made evident its vehement gratitude for Ed’s share in Johnny’s creation.

“Chee,” whispered Moxey to Al, as they sat close and rapt, with shining eyes, on the dollar seats high up and far away, “they’d tear up the chairs for Johnny’s mother if they’d perduce her.”

But now something was happening by the east entrance. The cheering suddenly ceased. A low anxious buzzing whisper ran over the entire assemblage. Men stood up to look eastward regardless of monitions from behind to sit down. Something was cutting through the crowd from the east entrance to the ring. It was Kid O’Mara in his cotton bathrobe preceded by a gigantic mulatto and followed by two smaller Caucasians.

Moxey’s bony fingers dug suddenly into Al’s biceps. “Kid, you gotta do it, Kid, you

Moxey

gotta," he whispered. "O, fer God's sake, Kid."

Al was surprised. "Are you with O'Mara?" he asked.

"Am I with him?" answered Moxey with a sob in his voice; "am I with him—he's me cousin."

"O'Mara *your* cousin?"

"Lipkowsky's his right name—same as mine. Look at his beak and see."

There was no doubt of it. "Kid O'Mara's" proboscis corroborated Moxey's claim.

Johnny's entrance a few minutes later was still more effective and his reception warmer. Fight fans are courtiers, always with the king.

When the two boys stripped, Johnny showed short and stocky, the Kid lank and lithe. Johnny depended on his punch, the Kid on his reach.

They fought ten rounds and it was called a draw, probably a just decision inasmuch as the adherents of each contestant proclaimed that the referee had been corrupted against their man.

Besides, a draw meant another fight be-

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tween them with plenty of money in the house.

This evening in fistiana was perhaps the most powerful single experience which influenced Al at this period of his life. For a long time he sat silent beside Moxey on the return trip, pondering the physical beauty of Johnny and the Kid and ruefully comparing their bodies with his own.

He sighed, "And now I s'pose your cousin'll go out and kill it to-night?"

"Not him," Moxey reassured; "he never touches it in any form or shape, understand."

"He's training all the time?" continued Al, bent on deciphering the secret ways of greatness.

"Yep. So you might say."

"Oh," then Al relapsed into silence to wrestle with the angel of training all the time.

Like most young fellows, Al regarded his body as the source of all the happiness that amounted to anything. The brain was merely its adjunct, its money maker and guide. Its operations might lead to life, but they were not life like the body's

It flashed upon him in the train bound home

Moxey

from the fight that he might achieve joy in either of two ways, by going in for sports or "sporting," by perfecting the animal in him or by abusing it, by getting into as good shape as Kid O'Mara or into as bad shape as the pale waster crumpled in the seat across the aisle.

So began a struggle in him, not yet ended, between the Ormuzd and Ahriman of physical condition. His high achievement thus far has been sixth place in a river Marathon swimming race, his completest failure thirty-six successive drunken hours in the restricted district.

FUSION

Al wasn't much of a head at books. Georgia persuaded him to start in high school, but he soon came out, for he found that it interfered with the free expression of his personality. There were too many girls about one and he became extremely apprehensive lest he develop into a regular lah-de-dah.

Georgia was more afraid of his developing into a regular rough and tough, so they had a very intense time of it in the flat while the question was under discussion.

Mother Talbot sided with neither of them. She wanted Al to continue his instructions, but in the institutions under the direction of the Church. She couldn't reconcile herself to Al's getting his learning in a place where the very name of God was banned, as it was in the public schools.

Indeed in her opinion, and you couldn't

Fusion

change it, no, not if you argued from now until the clap of doom, the main trouble with everything nowadays was impiety and weakening of faith, brought about how? Why, by these public schools, these atheist factories that were ashamed of the Saviour.

For her part, she couldn't see her son going to one of them with any peace of mind, and she wanted them both to remember, that he would go against her consent and in spite of her prayers. What's more, if he was undutiful in this matter he'd probably find himself sitting between a Jew and a nigger, which she must say would serve him right.

Did Georgia think, she inquired on another occasion, that the priests weren't up to teaching Al, or what? To be sure, learning was a fine thing for a boy starting out in the world and she approved of it as much as any one, but who ever heard of an ordinary priest who hadn't more wisdom in his little finger than a public school teacher had in her whole silly head?

In a church school he would receive instructions not only in temporal, but also in divine learning. He would be taught not merely history and mathematics and such

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like, but also goodness and pure living, which were far more important for any young fellow.

But Georgia could not be convinced. She said she had been to a convent and if she had it to do over again she would go to public high school—just as Al, who not only was a considerate and loving brother, but also could see clearly how sorry he would be in after life if he didn't, was about to decide to do.

She finally had her way and Al picked up his burden—and found it not so difficult to carry after all. For he joined the Alpha Beta Gammas and rose rapidly in that order, becoming its most expert and weariless initiator, a very terror to novitiates. But precisely at the moment when the Alpha Bets reached the zenith of their glory, the skies fell upon them—the edict coming from above that all fraternities must go.

Al went too. The place was indubitably fit for nothing but girls now. And whatever Georgia might say, this time he was going to stick, for in the last analysis she was a female and her words subject to discount.

He stuck, discounting the female; and she was distressed like a mother robin in the

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tree, whose youngling, that has just fluttered down, persists in hopping out of the long grass upon the shaven lawn, when, as all robinhood knew, there were cats in the kitchen around the corner of the house.

It is the impulse of youth to travel far in search of marvels, a vestige, so it is said, of the nomadic stage of human development, when the race itself was young. It was as member of a demonstration crew for a vacuum cleaning machine that Al enjoyed his *wanderjahre*. He went among strange people and heard the babbling of many tongues without passing out of Chicago.

Like a reporter, or a mendicant friar of old, he knocked on all doors. The slouch, the slattern, the miser and the saint opened to him; the pale young mother with a child at her breast and another at her skirts and both her eyes black and blue; or the gray old sewing woman who for her plainness had known neither the bliss nor the horror of a man. One rolling-mill husky in South Chicago chased him down stairs with a stick of wood, and another heaved his big arm around him and made him come in and wait while little Jerry took the pail to the corner.

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He came upon a household where one life was coming as another was going, and a little girl of twelve who could no longer contain the excitement of the day beneath her small bosom followed him into the entry way as he hastily backed out, and whispered between gasps to catch her breath her version of family history in the making.

He learned early the value of the smooth tongue, the timely bluff and the signed contract; and grew rapidly from boy to man in the forcing-bed of the city.

Meanwhile Moxey, not yet twenty, was swimming in a sea of sentiment. There was a young Italian girl who worked in the paper-box factory.

"Angelica," said he, "come to the dance to-night."

"Nit," she responded.

"Why?"

"Oh, they'd give me the laugh, if I ——" She paused tactfully."

"Account of——," he drew a semi-circle about his nose and laughed unhappily.

"We-ell." It was explicit enough.

"Can't see a guinea has anything on a

Fusion

Yiddisher." Tit for tat in love's badinage.

"I'm no guinea, I'm not," she exclaimed passionately. "I'm Amurrican."

"So'm I," he answered briskly. "I'm Amurrican—and I don't wear no hoops in my ears." Perhaps that would hold her for a while. It did. She retreated in tears, thinking of her sire's shame.

But her bosom was deep and her lips were as red as an anarchist flag, and her little nose tilted the other way. So why stay mad with her? Her eyebrows nearly met in the center, though she was only sixteen.

And as for dancing—well, he'd looked 'em all over in vaudeville and he couldn't see where they had anything on her. More steps perhaps, but no more looks—or class.

And Angelica went to dances with Irishers, loafers who'd never take care of her, and she wouldn't go with him. Well, he'd see if she wouldn't. He'd own that little nose of hers some day or know why. He'd make money, he'd be rich, he'd woo her with rings and pins and tickets of admission. He would be irresistible in his lavishness.

Johnny Fiteon, bantamweight champion of

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the world, contributed to the discomforture of those members of his race who liked to dance with Angelica, for on his second time out with Moxey's cousin he lost the decision by a shade.

Moxey knew he would beforehand. Johnny redeemed himself in their next encounter, however, and put the cousin away, so there could be no question about it.

And again Moxey, knowing beforehand that he would, prospered and showered Angelica with brooches. Also he purchased an equity in a two-story frame cottage with Greeks in the basement and Hunkies above. One shouldn't, he reflected, depend too much on sports to keep up the supply of brooches.

"Aggie," said he, as they returned from a dance together, "take a peep at this." He extracted a diamond solitaire pin from his tie and stopping under an arc light gave it to her to examine.

"I seen it," she snapped. "You been flashing it at me all evening. Think I'm blind?"

"Make up into a nice ring, wouldn't it?"

Angelica was wise. She knew what men

Fusion

were after. She didn't work in a paper-box factory for nothing. She would let them go just so far, to be sure, if they were good fellows, but she could draw the line. Indeed she had already drawn it once or twice with five thick little fingers on astonished cheeks. She measured her distance from the ardent Hebrew unconscious of his danger, but still she paused for greater certainty. Did the diamond mean another proposition—or was it maybe a proposal this time?

"I got my uncle in jail in Napoli," she said very quietly.

"I'm sorry," he answered simply. "But what of it? They had my brother Steve in Pontiac once."

"My uncle he killed the man that spoilt his daughter."

"That ain't nothing to be ashamed of, Aggie," he spoke kindly, seeking to console her, and took her small and stubby hand gently in his long sinewy ones; "he done right."

She never let him know, for her dignity, how low she once had feared he held her, and she kissed him goodnight many times.

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“They say you people are good to their women, Moxey,” she whispered. “Ours ain’t, always.” She paused. “Gee, my pa’ll have a fit.”

Moxey laughed. “Mine too, I guess,” said he, “but we won’t have to ask them for nothing, understand.”

MOXEY'S SISTER

"You'll stand up with me, won't you?" Moxey asked, a bit anxiously.

"Sure, of course," said Al.

"It's at night, and"—here was to be at least one wedding where the groom was no lay figure—"dress suits de rigger, understand."

"Sure, of course," Al assented impatiently. Did Moxey think he didn't know anything?

"We ain't going to tell the old folks for a couple of weeks to save hard feelings on both sides, that's our motto. And the kids is to be Catholics, she stood pat on that."

"Sure, of course, what did you expect 'em to be, kikes?" Perhaps Al spoke a trifle too explicitly, for Moxey flushed as he frequently did. It was his last remaining signal to the world that his hide wasn't as tough as he pretended.

"I ain't marr'in' her just because she's a

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peach," Moxey rhapsodized, "but she is. Wait till you see her and I'll leave it to you. But she's got principle, too. Her uncle killed a fellow for wronging his daughter and Aggie says he done right, if he is still doing time in the old country. Oh, there's plenty of principle in dagoes, you can say what you like. When you go foolin' around their women you gotta take a chance."

It was as if Moxey had pressed a bell in his friend's mind and opened a chamber there, where vague shapes appeared and suspicion had been gathering. For Al had observed Georgia's mysteries and evasions, her care before her mirror, her new hats and pretty ribbons, her day-long Sunday absences. Twice he had met her on the street, walking and chatting most gayly with some strange man. Besides his mother had plainly hinted that all might not be right.

"What do you think a fellow ought to do if a man's after his sister?" Al asked slowly. "This unwritten law thing don't seem to work any more except down South."

"You can't lay down no rule," said Moxey. "Depends on if you like your sister."

"If you do?"

Moxey's Sister

“Then go the limit and take a chance with your jury.” He paused and great shame came to his cheeks again. “I had a sister, oncet . . . and she, well y’ understand. . . . I sometimes thought I oughta of killed him . . . but I never did . . . I kept askin’ myself ‘what’s the good of killing him now? Becky’s done for anyhow, and it’d just do for me, too.’ . . . The time to look out for a girl is beforehand, not afterwards.”

There was no doubt about that, especially in theory. But Al contemplated somewhat dubiously the task of safeguarding Georgia. She was so blamed independent. She might say he was impertinent, or she might just laugh at him. She was fairly certain, at all events, not to acquiesce readily in any watch and ward policy which he might seek to institute for her benefit. Still— in a well conducted family the men were supposed to look out for the women and keep the breath of dishonor from them. He was the man of the family now, if he was only eighteen, and so it was up to him to find out if Georgia was in danger, and if she was, to get her out of it *beforehand*.

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"I seen your sister once," remarked Moxey, guessing his thoughts.

Al was silent.

"Looked like she could take care of herself."

"Oh, she's got good sense," said Al, "but you know the riddle, 'Why's a woman like a ship? Because it takes a man to manage her.'"

"Yes," assented Moxey, "and they have more respect, understand, for the fellow who can say *no* to 'em when it's right."

So after supper that evening, instead of going over to the pool parlor, Al stayed at home waiting for his mother to go to bed, when he could have a talk with Georgia and pump her and find out about this strange man she knew, and if necessary say *no*.

His mother drew up to the lamp and darned his socks and talked and talked on endlessly it seemed to him. He felt a little abused when nine o'clock came, which was her bed time, and still she made no move to go.

She did get a little tiresome at times. He would acknowledge that frankly to himself, though he would not let her see it for

Moxey's Sister

worlds—except by staying away from her most of the time, and not paying attention to her when he was with her.

If his most affectionate greeting of the day came as a rule when he said "Good night, mother dear," he didn't realize it; and it would have amazed him to know that sometimes she sniffled for as much as half an hour after she went to bed, because he had shown so plainly that he was glad to be rid of her. She supposed in her sadness that he was an unnatural, almost unparalleled example of unfilial ingratitude; not suspecting he was only a rear rank file in the Ever Victorious Army of Youth.

Al wound his watch. "Gee, quarter of ten," he remarked, through a yawn. He stretched himself elaborately. Mother was certainly delaying the game. Until she went he couldn't have his round-up with Georgia, who was in one of her after-supper reading spells and had hardly said a word all evening.

She now had a fad for those little books bound in imitation green leather that constituted the World's Epitome of Culture series and cost thirty-five cents apiece, or two maga-

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zines and an extra Sunday paper, as she put it.

She had been through twenty of them already and was now on her twenty-first. He didn't deny that it was creditable to go in for culture. If that was the sort of thing she liked, why, as the fellow says, he supposed she liked that sort of thing. It's a free country. But as for him, when he was tired with the day's work, he thought he was entitled to a little recreation—a game of pool, a couple of glasses of beer, maybe a swim in a “nat”—he wasn't bad at the middle distances—and he couldn't see drawing up a chair under a lamp and going to work again, for that was what it amounted to, on a little green Epitome that you had to study over to get the meaning, or maybe look in the dictionary, as she was doing now. She had told him that they were more interesting than the other kind of books and had even got him to start on a couple she said he was sure to like, because they were so exciting—Marco Polo's Travels and Froissart's Chronicles—but they didn't excite him any, and he made only about thirty pages in each of them.

Indeed, it was his private opinion that

Moxey's Sister

Georgia was more or less bunking herself with this upward and onward stuff. She fell for it because it helped her feel superior. And then she worked herself up to believing she really liked it because people were surprised she knew so much and said she had a naturally fine mind. A vicious circle.

In all of which cogitations he was perhaps not entirely astray; though her chief incitement was more concrete than he supposed. She wanted to impress Stevens in particular, rather than people in general—she was determined to keep even with him so that he could never talk down to her as to a mere “womanly woman” who held him by sex and nothing more.

When at last Mrs. Talbot arose, Al hastened to her, kissed her affectionately, slipped his arm around her, impelled her towards the door, opened it rapidly, kissed her again, closed it firmly behind her, lit a cigarette, and began: “Georgia, I want to have a heart to heart with you.”

“In a second.” She read the last half page of her chapter so rapidly that she was compelled to read it over again for conscience’

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sake, then inserted her book-mark and turned to him: "Fire away."

"Who's the mysterious stranger?"

She had known it was coming for the last half hour. From the corner of her eye, she had spied the importance of the occasion actually oozing out of young Al. At first she thought of side-stepping the interview, but eventually decided not to, partly to please the lad and more still to hear how her case would stand when discussed aloud. She had been in a most chaotic state of mind ever since the agreement with Stevens to pretend; that which wasn't clear then was hazier now; she was of ten minds a day whether to give in to her lover or to give in to the Church. Now she would listen to Georgia and Al talk about the case as if they were two other people, in the hope of finding guidance in her eavesdropping.

"He is a man in the office whom I like," she answered.

"How much?"

"A lot."

"And he does, too?"

"Yes, a lot."

Moxey's Sister

"Hmm—you know I hate to preach, but—" **Hesitation.**

"You think you will, all the same. Go on, I'm listening."

"You know I'm liberal. If you were just fooling with this fellow, I'd never peep, honest, I wouldn't."

She smiled, "I'll promise to only fool with my next beau."

"Now, this is no laughing matter," he rebuked her levity. "If you're really—stuck on each other—it may bust you all to pieces before you're done with it—unless you quit in time."

"What do you mean by 'quit'?"

"Give up seeing him altogether. It would be safer."

"Yes, so it would. But what's that got to do with it?"

"A woman can't afford to take chances," he retorted impressively.

"It seems to me the people who get the most fun out of life are the ones who do take chances. Your little tin hero, Roosevelt, for instance—you like him because he'd rather hunt a lion or a trust than a sure thing. Jim Horan didn't eat smoke for the money

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in it, but because he thought a wall might fall on him some day—or might not. That's what he wanted to find out. Well, perhaps I want to find out if a wall will fall on me some day—or not."

Al was astounded. There was something more than bold, something hardly decent in the comparison of her own dubious flirtation to a great fireman's martyrdom or a soldier-statesman-sportsman's courage and career.

"But, Georgia," he expostulated, "you speak like a man in a manhole. Horan and Roosevelt did their duty taking chances."

"Rubbish," she said. "They acted according to their natures and I will act according to mine—some day."

He looked unutterably distressed, for he loved her, and foresaw ruin enfolding her. He knew that women aren't allowed to act according to their natures, if their natures are as natural as all that.

"I haven't seen Jim for over a year," she went on, "nor heard of him for ten months. He may be dead. He is the same as dead to me. My heart is the heart of a widow—grateful for her weeds. The Church may say otherwise—and I might obey unwillingly—

Moxey's Sister

but my own being tells me that there is nothing wrong in my love for Mason Stevens—any more than it's sin to breathe air or drink water. That's how we're made. When I lived with Jim, I played no tricks. But that's over now, it's over for good. What's the difference whether he's under the sod or above it, so far as I'm concerned?" Her eyes were alight and she walked back and forth, gesticulating like a Beveridge, persuading herself that what she wished was just because she wished it. "I've got a few good years of youth left. I'll not throw them away for a religious quibble."

"You mean divorce and marry again—openly?"

"What does the ceremony matter? I'm not sure we'd take the trouble of going through it," she shrugged her shoulders, "the Church says that it means nothing anyway; that it makes the sin no less."

"But, Georgia," he was beginning now to fear for her common sense, "for God's sake, if you do such a thing, first go through the civil form anyway."

She laughed triumphantly. She had caught him. "There spoke your heart. Of

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course, we'll have a legal marriage. You see the Church hasn't convinced you, either, that divorce and remarriage is the same as adultery."

She had crystallized her vague desires into positive determination by the daring sound of her own words.

XIII

REËNTER JIM

Al reflected moodily that arguing with a woman never gets you anything. If he had been trying to interest Georgia in a vacuum cleaner, he would have known better than to start in by arousing her to a fervor for brooms. Now he would have to wait a few days until she had cooled out, and then try her on a different tack, appealing to her affection and begging her not to bring disgrace upon the whole family.

She was half-sitting, half-kneeling on the window seat, her elbows on the sill, her cheeks in her hands, looking out into the dim urban night. Directly to the south, over the loop, where Chicago was wide awake and playing, the diffused electric radiance was brightest and highest—a man-made borealis.

She took pride in her big city. It was unafraid. It followed no rules but its own, and

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didn't always follow them. It owned the future in fee and pitied the past. It said, not "Ought I?" but "I will." It was modern, just as she was modern. She was more characteristically the offspring of her city than of her mother. For she was new, like Chicago; and her mother was old, like the Church.

So she pondered in the pleasant after-glow of decision, buttressing her resolve.

The bell rang from the vestibule below and she went to the speaking tube to find out what was wanted. "Yes?" she inquired, then without saying anything more she walked slowly to her room.

"Who was it?" asked Al, but she closed the door behind her without answering. Funny things, women. He went to the tube himself.

"What you want?"

"It's Jim."

"Jim?—well, for the love of goodness goodness Agnes—d'you want to come up?"

"Yes, if it's all right."

Al pressed the door-opener, but before climbing the stairs Jim shouted another question through the tube: "Wasn't that Georgia who spoke first?"

"Yes."

Reënter Jim

“Well, why did she—how is she, anyway?”

“Fine. Come along.”

There was a great change in Jim. He must have taken off forty or fifty pounds. His eyes were clear, his skin healthily brown, and he had hardened up all over. He looked a good ten years younger than the last time Al saw him, except for one thing, that his hair had thinned out a great deal. He was almost bald on top.

They shook hands and Jim gave him a solid grip. “Cheese,” said the younger fellow heartily, “you look good—primed for a battle, almost.” He put his fingers on the other’s biceps.

Jim drew up his clenched fist, showing a very respectable bunch of muscle. “More than there ever used to be, eh?” he asked, smiling broadly.

Al whistled, stepped back for a better look at the miracle, and whistled. “And yet they say they never come back. Hm-m-m—how’d you do it?”

“Working. Rousty on a dredge in Oklahoma.”

“Rousty?”

“Toted coal to the firemen, later got to

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firing myself—on the night shift. We kept her going steady. Funny thing, irrigating way out there, t'hell an' gone, in the middle of the frogs barking and the cattle bawling feeding your old thirty-horse and watching the old scoop lifting out her yard of sludge every six minutes. You got so it seemed the most natural thing in the world, but it ain't, is it?"

"What'd they pay?"

"Fifty and board. But the money's being in the business. Me and our day trainman was talking of getting shares in a dredge. There's work there for a thousand years. Where's Georgia?"

Al nodded his head toward her door.

"So's not to see me?"

Al nodded.

"I came clear from there in the busy season for the sight of her and I didn't come alone. I've three hundred here," said Jim, taking a roll of bills from his pocket. "And to be turned down this way, with my heart full of love——" He was greatly moved and he showed it, for his lip trembled and his voice shook.

Al was sorry for him. "Aw, she'll come

Reënter Jim

around. She's got a stubborn streak, you know that, but she does right in the end. Give her time. I'll talk to her."

Jim felt sure that she must have heard their conversation, especially the last part of it, for he had talked quite distinctly and he remembered from the old days how readily all the sounds in the flat penetrated into that room. He got on his hands and knees and looked at the crack beneath her door to see if her room was lighted.

"She's sitting in the dark," he whispered, "Would it be all right to knock?"

"I don't know," said Al uncertainly.

Jim knocked softly, then a little more loudly, but there was no answer. He put his ear to the door to listen, then tip-toed away.

"She's crying," he whispered to Al, "crying to beat the band. Those heavy deep kind of sobs. I could barely hear her. Must have her face in the pillow. Now what do you know about that?"

"That's a good sign," said Al, "means she's coming around. When she just turns white and don't speak——"

Jim privately opined that he understood Georgia's moods vastly better than Al ever

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would, and was in no need of instruction on this subject.

"You mean when she has one of her silences," he said, giving the thing its proper name.

"Yes, that's when you can't handle her. But now, she's begun to melt already. So to-morrow evening come for supper, and I bet my shirt you are all made up in thirty minutes."

Jim wrung his hand. "You're a thoroughbred, Al—and take this from me now, I've learned sense. If I get her back, I'll keep her. No more booze, never one drop."

He counted out four five-dollar bills upon the center table. "That's what I borrowed, when I quit," he explained. As he reached the door he turned to confirm his happy appointment. "Six thirty to-morrow evening?"

THE PALACE OF THE UNBORN

The following morning brother and sister rode down-town together in the cars. "Don't you think you might have consulted me before asking Jim to supper?" she inquired.

"Don't be foolish," he replied cheerfully, "you were locked in your room."

She worked all day in that state of suppressed excitement which presages great events, from the first ride on the lodge goat to the codicil part of uncle's will. Everything she saw or touched was more vivid than usual to her senses. Her typewriter keys seemed picked out in the air against a deep perspective, their lettering very heavy, their clicking singularly loud. One of the little flags caught in a ventilation grill, and instead of fluttering out freely, flapped and bellied, making a small snapping noise. A flag wasn't meant to do that, so she crossed the big room, pulled up a chair and released

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it, somewhat to the surprise of the youth sitting directly beneath it.

The old man, usually rapid enough with his letters, seemed hopelessly slow and awkward this morning, and she had to bite her tongue to keep from helping him out with the proper word when he got stuck. He was leaning back in his swivel chair, wasting interminable time with pauses and laryngeal interjections, the tips of his fingers together, his eyes half closed, droning out his sentences. He wore a little butterfly tie, to-day, blue spots on brown, just below his active Adam's apple and thin, corded neck. Under the point of his chin was a little patch which his razor had skipped, hopelessly white. She wondered what could be in it for him any more, and why he didn't retire.

She rattled off her letters, then added a note for Stevens, "Dinner to-night?" and left it in the S compartment of the *Letters Received* box.

When he came in later for his afternoon mail he caught her eye and nodded, and on the way out of the old man's office stopped at her desk for a few hasty words: "What time, and where?"

The Palace of the Unborn

"Wherever you like—at six thirty."

"Max's?" he suggested, "we'll have snails."

"Oh, what a perfectly dear place—in every sense of the word."

"My treat," he said.

"No."

"You never dined with me before; you might let me celebrate."

"We'll celebrate anyway, Dutch. Make it Max's."

He didn't prolong the argument. They had long before made a compact that the expenses of their expeditions should be shared.

"I suppose," he inquired, "your six thirty really means seven. I've an appointment, might keep me till then, unless——"

"I'll meet you on the stroke of half-past," she said, and was as good as her word.

They had snails *à la Max*, whereof the frame is finer than the picture, as well as Maxian frogs' legs, boned and wrapped in lettuce leaves, and, not without misgivings, a bottle of claret.

Stevens, unaware that it was their last time of pretending, abided by the rules. They talked shop and shows and vacations. Georgia

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slipped in a few appropriate words concerning her cultural progress. They were both somewhat severe upon the orchestra, because there was too much noise to the music, so Mason beckoned the head waiter and "requested" the barcarole from *Tales of Hoffman*, and they floated off in it toward the edge of what they knew.

It is said that most people have at least two personalities. In this respect Georgia was like them. One side of her was the woman of 1850, and the times previous; whether mother, wife, daughter, maiden or mistress, primarily something in relation to man, her individuality submerged in this relationship, as a soldier's individuality is submerged in his uniform.

The other aspect of Georgia's nature was that of the "new woman," the women hoped for in 1950. Bold, determined, taught to think, relentless in defense of her own personality, insistent that men shall have less and she shall have more sexual freedom, she is first of all herself and only next to that, something to a man.

When the woman of 1850 managed to get in a word about Jim and his fruitless wait at

The Palace of the Unborn

home, the woman of 1950 answered, "Shall you now be absurd enough to leave the man you love for one you hate?"

"Shall we take in a show?" he suggested when they had finished their coffee.

"I believe I'd rather walk home."

"Why, it's five miles." He was somewhat disconcerted by her energy, for he was distinctly let down, in reaction from his day's work, and his afternoon's excitement of looking forward to an unusual meeting with her, which had turned out after all to be more than commonly placid.

"Five miles—and a heavenly night. The first of spring. Come, brace up."

"You must be feeling pretty strong."

"No," she said, "I am getting a bit head-achy, I want some air, to get out of four walls and merge into the darkness—if you know what I mean."

"You're not going to be sick?" he asked concernedly.

"O, no—it's just a touch of spring fever, I imagine."

There is a cement path with a sloping concrete breakwater which winds between Lake Michigan on one side and Lincoln Park on

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the other for a distance of several miles. Here come the people in endless procession from morning until midnight, two by two, male and female, walking slow and talking low, permeated by the souls of children begging life.

It is a chamber of Maeterlinck's azure palace of the unborn.

Presently, by good luck, Georgia and her lover came upon a bench just as another couple was quitting it—the supply of benches being inadequate to the demands of pleasant evenings in spring. The departing two passed, one around each end of the seat, and walked rapidly, several feet apart, across the strip of lawn and bridal path beyond. They were delayed at the curb by the stream of automobiles and stood out in clear relief against the passing headlights.

It was evident they had been quarreling, for the man looked sullen and the woman, half turned away, shrugged her shoulders to what he was saying.

Georgia had been watching them. "Too bad," said she, "they're having a row."

"Perhaps they're not meant for each other."

The Palace of the Unborn

"Everyone quarrels sometimes," she answered, "meant or not."

"Do you think we would, if ——"

"I'm sure of it," she replied sharply. "We're human beings, not angels."

There was doubtless common sense in what she said, but nevertheless it delighted him not. He wished that she could in such moments as these, yield herself fully to the illusion which possessed him that their life together would be one sempiternal climax of joy.

"I honestly believe," he asserted solemnly, "that sometimes two natures are so perfectly adjusted that there is no friction between them."

"Rubbish," she replied, quoting a newly read Shaw preface, "people aren't meant to stew in love from the cradle to the grave."

She couldn't understand her own mood. She had arranged this evening with Stevens to tell him that she was ready to marry him, and she found herself unable to. Her conscious purpose was the same as ever.

Yet as often as she summoned herself to look the look or keep the silence which would put in train his declaration. it seemed as if

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she received from her depths a sudden and imperative mandate against it.

It was her long silence while she was pondering over these strange things which gave him a false cue and he entered to the center of her consciousness.

"This wasting of ourselves must go on until he dies?"

"The only way out is death," she said slowly, "or apostasy."

"Apostasy?" The word had an ugly sound even for him.

"I know one woman who did it for love of a man."

"And she is happy?"

Georgia did not answer at once.

"And she is happy," he repeated seriously, as if much depended on the question, "or not?"

"She says she is," she answered, "but I don't think so. She doesn't look happy—about the eyes—one notices those things. She seems changed—and—reckless and—and she's not always been faithful to her husband. I found it out."

"You found it out?"

"Yes, she asked me to go to a dinner party.

The Palace of the Unborn

Her husband was away from town—there were four of us—and I could tell what it meant. She wanted me to do what she was doing—and we had been friends so long—we took our first communion together.”

“Georgia,” he asked, chilled through with fright, “do you often have that sort of thing put in your way?”

“I have plenty of chances to make a mess of life,” she replied, “every woman does, who’s passable looking, especially downtown women.”

“Dearest heart,” he begged, “I can’t go on thinking of that the rest of my life. Marry me and let me shield and shelter you from all this——”

“This what?”

“Temptation,” he blurted, “and rotten, unwomanly down-town life. A woman ought to be taken care of, in her own home, by the man who loves her and respects and honors her.”

Georgia smiled. “Do you know,” she asked, “that’s almost exactly word for word the way he talked to this friend of mine and persuaded her to get her divorce and leave the Church and marry him—almost word for

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word—she told me about it at the time. And now she's—fooling him. It didn't shield her from temptation."

"But I have known people to be divorced and marry again and live perfectly happy and respectable lives."

"Protestants—weren't they?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Ah, that's the point. They do what they think is right, but a Catholic does what she knows is wrong, and begins her new marriage in a wilful sin, so what can grow from it but more sin?"

Her voice, naturally full and resonant like a trained speaker's, was thin and uncertain as she told of the apostate. Her other self, the woman of the past, was ascendant, but she fought against what she conceived to be a momentary weakness, and forced her resolution as a skillful rider forces an unwilling horse over a jump. "But if you want me," she said in words that trembled, "you can have me."

"If I want you ——" He took her in his arms and kissed her.

It seemed to her definitely in that instant that nothing could ever be quite the same

The Palace of the Unborn

with her again, that a certain fine purity had passed from her forever and she must live thereafter on a lower plane.

All the modernistic teachings, books, lectures, pamphlets with which she had in recent years packed her head, on woman's right to selfhood, parasitic females, prostitution in marriage, endowed motherhood, sexual slavery; and all the practical philosophy of the success school which she had learned from years of contact with money-makers, that life is more for the daring than for the good, were washed away by the earlier-formed and deeper-lying impressions of her youth.

She was aware of a fleeting return of her virginal feeling that to give herself to one man was humbleness sufficient for a lifetime; but to give herself to two would be the permanent lowering of pride.

But she felt that for her the moving finger had writ and passed. There could be no more going back or shadow of turning. Henceforth, for good or evil, she belonged to this man.

She yielded to his kisses, as many as he wished, in passive submission.

"You will always be good to me—promise

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that, promise me, dear," she begged, "because if you're not I'll ——" Her voice choked and two tears rolled down her cheeks. Gone was her freedom and her pride. She spoke, not as her ideal had been, partner speaking to partner on even terms, but as a servant to her master, asking not justice but mercy.

Her solitary happiness in this hour was the feeling that the man was the stronger, that despite his greenness and awkwardness and the ease with which she had hitherto controlled him, fundamentally his nature was bigger than hers and that she was compelled to follow him. In her new feebleness she rejoiced that she sinned not boldly and resolutely, but because she had been taken in the traditional manner by the overpowering male.

"I have been looking forward to this for longer than you suspect," said she, "and now that it's come, I feel as if I were at a play watching it happen to some one else."

He put his hand on her shoulder, then quickly turned her white face to his. "Why, what is the matter?" he asked. "You are shaking like a leaf."

The Palace of the Unborn

"I think I'd better go home. It is damp and cold sitting here." After they had gone a few steps, she said, with a weak little laugh, "I've lost my enthusiasm for walking. Put me on the car."

He began to be thoroughly frightened. "Don't worry, dear," she reassured him. "Nothing can change us now. We belong to each other—for keeps."

They said little to each other in the brightly lighted street car. She sat slightly crumpled, her shoulders rounded, swaying to the stops and starts. She breathed slowly through her lips, and her eyes had the strange wide-open look of a young bird's, when you hold it in your hands. And he, but partly understanding, yearned for her helplessly, and covenanted with his nameless gods that no sorrow should ever come to her from him.

She hung to his arm as they walked up the half-lighted street where she lived, between rows of three, four and five story flat buildings full of drama. Outside her own she stopped and looked up to her windows. They were brightly lighted.

Instead of using her key, she rang the bell

Rebellion

to her apartment. She heard Al's voice in answer.

"Is Jim there?" she asked.

"Yes."

She turned to Stevens with a flash of her old positiveness.

"I must go somewhere else. And I don't feel like telling my troubles to any friend to-night. So will you take me to a hotel?"

They returned to the car line by an unusual street, lest Al should come looking after her, she driving her sick frame along by sheer will, her lover resolved that if need be he would save her from herself.

She waited while he engaged her room, and when he came bringing her key, he said, "I have put you down as Miss Talbot."

"Oh, you were nice to think of that. I like to imagine sometimes it still is so." She took his hand. "Good night, dear," she whispered. "I will be a true wife to you."

MR. SILVERMAN

Stevens called up Georgia's room in the morning to ask how she had slept and she reported, "Well—that is, pretty well," which wasn't true, for she had tossed wretchedly through the night. By careful brushing and buying a shirtwaist she managed to measurably freshen her appearance, though she reached the office with tired eyes and hectic splotches beneath her eyes. Al was there before her waiting with white face.

"Georgia," he began miserably, "I've been hunting the town for you. Where have you been?"

"Alone."

"You've frightened us half to death. Mother's sick over it."

"You can have Jim in the house, or me, but not both of us."

She would give him no more satisfaction, and he was turning away angry at her obstinacy, when Mason came up to greet her.

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“Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

Al quickly divined that here was the man. It was written in the way he looked at her, and in Georgia's sudden sidelong glance at Al to see if he saw.

“I'd like a word with you,” said the brother to the lover, tapping him on the shoulder with studied rudeness, “now.”

Stevens didn't understand the situation, but he was properly resentful, and lowered at the stranger. In these subtle days of commerce, finger-tips on collar bones may convey all that was once meant by a glove in the face.

“My brother, Mr. Stevens,” she explained. They did not shake hands. Mason was not quite sure from the young fellow's expression just what might happen, but he was sure it had better not happen right there. “Let's get out of the office—and you can have as many words as you want,” said he. Georgia arose to go with them.

“No, don't you come,” said Stevens.

“I think perhaps it would be better.”

“But it wouldn't. You stay here,” the man answered with great positiveness. She

Mr. Silverman

sank obediently in the chair, to the disgusted amazement of her brother, and let them go alone.

“Were you out with her last night?”

“Yes.”

The lad sunk his hand to his coat pocket, his wild young brain aflame with violence and romance and vengeance and the memory of Moxey's sweetheart's uncle who had slain the despoiler of his home. Stevens was near death and he knew it, but he never batted an eye as Al reported later to Moxey.

“I knew it damned well. She said she was alone.” His hand tightened on the automatic, pressing down the safety lock, and he pointed the gun, so that he could shoot through his pocket and kill.

“She was, after eleven. I left her then.”

“Prove it. You've got to,” insultingly.

“Go look at the hotel register, for the name of Miss Georgia Talbot.”

Al grunted. Here was a concrete fact—subject to verification, yes or no. “All right,” he vouchsafed curtly, “if it turns out that way—but one more thing—keep away from her after this altogether—understand.” Al shot out his jaw and swung around his pocket

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with the barrel pointing straight at Stevens' middle. He looked just then a good deal like a young tough delivering a serious threat, which he was.

Stevens shoved his derby hat back and laughed. "If you think you can run me around with the pop-gun, guess again. I'm going to marry Georgia and you're coming to the wedding," he stepped right up to the gun and tapped Al sharply on the shoulder, "understand."

It was perhaps a chancy thing to do, for the lad had worked himself into a state of self-righteous anger, and his vanity was savagely exulted by the sensation of putting it over on a full-grown man to his face. But Stevens had acted instinctively as he frequently did in stressful moment and his instinct played him true this time.

"She ain't allowed to marry again, so you keep off the grass," he answered loudly, but his voice broke and shot up an octave as he took his hand from his pocket to clench his fist and shake it in the other's face.

Whereat Stevens knew he had him and answered quietly in his most matter-of-fact business tones, "That's for her to say—and

Mr. Silverman

she's said it." He smiled. "You know she's free, white, and twenty-one."

Al, not sure just what his next step ought to be, walked away, probably to consult with Moxey, muttering as he went, "Well, remember I warned you."

Stevens returned to the office and explained the incident briefly to Georgia, "Oh, the kid was excited at first, but I reassured him." While they were talking the old man rang her buzzer and asked her to have Mr. Stevens come in.

A dark, beaked, heavy-browed, much-dressed gentleman was in the old man's office, introduced to Mason as Mr. Silverman.

Mr. Silverman deserves a paragraph or two. He was said to be a Polish, a Russian or a Spanish Jew, but nobody knew for sure or dared ask him, for he didn't like it. At sixteen or thereabouts, he came to the company as an office boy, and in two months was indispensable. At thirty-seven, owing partly to the conscientious performance of his duties and more to his earnestness in pulling feet from the rungs above him, and stamping fingers from the rungs below, he was elected to a position especially created for him, to-wit,

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Executive Secretary to the President of The Eastern Life Insurance Company of New York, which gave him everything to say about the running of it except the very last word.

Perhaps once a quarter he was reversed, and always on some extremely important matter involving the investment of funds. This galled him beyond measure, but he kept it to himself.

At the last annual election, he would have presented himself as a candidate for president, or at least for first vice-president with power to act, but after sizing up the way the proxies were running for the new directorate, he knew that crowd would never stand for him, so he squelched his own boom for the time being, and waited. The title was re-conferred for the fifteenth time upon a charming but delicate plutocrat of the fourth generation of New Yorkers, who was compelled to spend his term health-hunting in European spas, where Mr. Silverman took delight in sending him for decision a copious stream of unimportant but vexatiously technical questions, which much disturbed the invalid's serenity, for he had entered the company at the top, and didn't know detail. Mr. Silverman

Mr. Silverman

himself settled the more important matters, inasmuch as there wasn't time to send to Europe and wait for an answer. Whenever he reached for a stronger hold, he had an incontrovertible excuse, and he got to know Mr. Morgan personally.

He was stocky, with ample room for his digestion, and like most fighting men, he had a good thick neck that carried plenty of blood to his head. His unpleasantest trait was his shame of race, and his most agreeable one an understanding love of music. His only exercise was strong black cigars, and everyone on the company's payroll dreaded his seemingly preternatural knowledge of what was going on.

"Mr. Stevens," said he, "sit down. I have heard of you." Then to allow that pregnant remark to sink in he turned to Georgia. "Take this, please: 'Mr. W. F. Plaisted, General Agent in charge S. W. Division, Eastern Life Insurance Company, Kansas City, Mo. Déar Sir: Please furnish the bearer, Mr. Mason Stevens, with whatever information he desires. He is my personal representative. With kind regards, Yours truly, Executive Secretary to the President.'

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“That is all.” He nodded to Georgia, and she departed. The old man pussy-footed after her, leaving the other two together in his private office.

“You are to take the nine o’clock train to-night for Kansas City to prepare a report for me on why we aren’t getting more business in the town and our competitors less. Here are some letters from New York to certain banks there which will admit you to their confidence. Find out all you can about Plai-sted and his office before you go to him. Send me a night letter to my hotel every night as to your progress. Use this code.” He took a typewritten sheet of synonyms from his pocket. “Should you cross the trail of another investigator for the Eastern, you are not to reveal yourself to him. This point you are to bear in mind.” He paused for an answer.

“Yes, sir,” said Stevens.

“Your expense money will be liberal; and mind, no talk—not even a hint to your best girl. I suppose, of course, there is one.” Mason smiled, but did not answer. “I am told you are not married.”

“No, sir.”

Mr. Silverman

“Perhaps it is just as well. Women are to live with, not to travel with, and you’re still traveling.” Mr. Silverman lit a fifty-center, and then, being a natural-born commander, topped off his instructions with hopes of loot. “Good luck, young man. You’re shaking hands with your future on this trip.”

Mason came from the interview consecrated to the task of getting the goods on Plaisted. Going after him was like going after ivory in Africa. Landing a prospect was as tame relatively as plugging ducks on the Illinois River. For Plaisted had been a big man in the company in his day, though getting a little old now. With solid connections through Missouri, Kansas and the Southwest, if he fell, he’d fall with a smash.

Mason rather fancied that in company politics he could see as far through a grindstone as his neighbor, if it had a hole in it. He knew that there was a hidden but bitter fight for control of the business between the old New York society crowd who had inherited it, and the younger abler men, under the leadership of Silverman, who had grown up from the ranks. He knew that his own

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boss, the old man, lined up with Silverman, but that Plaisted had delivered the southwestern proxies in a solid block, for the New York ticket. He therefore inferred that Silverman didn't feel strong enough to remove Plaisted without a pretty plausible reason and that he was being sent to Kansas City to find the reason; and failing that, to make one, which, as it turned out, was precisely what he did.

He set out on his mission with as little compunction as a soldier who had received orders to shoot to kill. For, as he told himself, surely Plaisted had also pulled down men in his time. Life is a battle. Therefore is it not well to be with the conqueror and share in the cut?

If he could now make good with Silverman, and, more especially, convince him that he was a live one who would keep on making good, the Jew would certainly recognize him in the reorganization. He had visions of tooling along the macadam in his Panno Six to a vined house in the suburbs, hidden by tall trees, where, in a trailing gown, Georgia would walk through her flowers to meet him, with a small hand clinging to each of hers.

Mr. Silverman

Plaisted had now become, to all intents and purposes, his competitor; and going after your competitors is the life of trade. As for Mrs. Plaisted—if there was one—who was she against Georgia?

GEORGIA LEAVES HOME

He expected to be gone several weeks, so Georgia telephoned the janitor to tell mama that she would stay down for dinner, again, but would be home soon afterwards. Mason took her to the top of a tall building, where there was a sixty cent table d'hôte. The topic, of course, was his forthcoming trip from routine to adventure and its probable effect upon their fortunes.

For all the wise saws about not talking to women, one may hardly dine with his fiancée of a day without mention of the marvelous opportunity which dropped before one that morning as from the skies. Especially if she is in the same business and heard it drop.

So, little by little, one thing leading to another, he told her everything he knew or guessed or hoped. He did not once forget Silverman's injunction to silence, as he babbled on. It stuck in his mind like a thorn in

Georgia Leaves Home

the foot; and, telling himself he was a fool to talk, he talked. The precise moment didn't seem to come when he could frankly say, without offense, "Georgia, that part of it is a secret." And he didn't see how to temporize widely, for it had become physically impossible for him to lie to her, though; of course, he retained the use of his faculties for commerce with others.

So he passed on the ever heavy load of silence, hoping that she could hold her tongue if he couldn't. It was as much her affair as his anyway, so he felt, and if by her indiscretion she should cut him out of Silverman's confidence and future big things, she would in the same motion cut herself out of a Panno Six and a house in the trees and a richer circle of friends.

But, inasmuch as she was a case-hardened private secretary, she kept her faith with him in this thing at least. If he never has a Panno Six it wasn't her fault.

The most surprising thing to her in his narrative was that it did not more greatly interest her. It seemed to her a far-off affair, impersonal, like something she was reading in the papers. Stevens seemed to stand out-

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side her area of life, which had become narrow and curiously uneasy, heavy with a future in which he was not concerned.

At first he attributed the listlessness, which she tried to conceal but could not, to one of the widely advertised feminine moods, and he tried his best to divert her not merely with pictures of their future, blissful and automobileful, but also with quips and cranks and wanton wiles. No go.

So when course VI of the table d'hôte—nuts and pecans, three of each to the order—was ended, he suggested that perhaps she would better go directly home instead of waiting downtown with him until his train went. She acquiesced. They walked to the "L" in silence.

Imagine the chagrin of a knight riding off to the bloody wars from a ladye who didn't care if he never came back. That was how it struck him. She took his arm to climb the steep iron stairs, and at the top stopped a moment to get her breath.

"Dear heart," she said, "don't have all those awful thoughts about me—don't you suppose I know what you're thinking? I've

Georgia Leaves Home

been dull to-night, but my head is simply splitting. I believe I'm in for the grip."

He looked at his watch. "I'm sure I can take you home and get back in time."

"Rather than have you risk it, I'll stay down until your train goes."

"Promise me then to get a doctor and go right to bed."

"I'll go right to bed—I can barely hold my head up, and I'll get a doctor in the morning if I'm not better."

There were only two or three other people on the long platform, so he kissed her good-bye. Then the screened iron gate was slapped to behind her, the guard jerked his cord, she smiled weakly and waved her hand back at him, and it was all over for a much longer time than he had any idea of.

He watched her train until the tail lights turned the loop, then said "Hell," lit a cigar, pushed his hat back, sighed and went to check his trunk.

He sat up in the smoking compartment gassing with drummers until the last of them turned in, sympathized for awhile with the Pullman porter, who suffered volubly as soon as Mason gave him permission to. He had

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been married that very afternoon and now he was off to Los Angeles and back, a ten-day journey, leaving behind him as a dark and shining mark for those who realized the devilishness of his itinerary an unprotected, young, gay-hearted bride. He appreciated the snares that would be set for her by his brothers of brush and berth. He'd been a bachelor himself. "Yas, sah, railroadin' is sure one yalla dawg's life for a fambly man."

Stevens lay awake a long time that night thinking of the future, and Georgia lay awake a long time considering the past. She felt hot and thirsty; three or four times she got out of bed and ran the faucet until the water was cold and bathed her face and drank.

After she had left Stevens she had taken a cross seat in the car facing homeward, and, placing her burning cheek against the window for coolness, had dozed off for many stations. When she awoke with a start at the one beyond her own, her personality had slipped to its earlier center as definitely as when a clutch slips from high to second speed.

It is said that the last step gained by the

Georgia Leaves Home

individual or the race is the first step lost, in sickness, age and fear. So Georgia's illness began its attack on the topmost layer of her character, that part of it which had been built in the recent years. She was driven, as it were, to a lower floor of her own edifice and no longer saw so wide a view.

Her pride and self-will crumbled—for the sick aren't proud—and her modernity trickled away. After all, was it not more peaceful to do what people thought you ought to, than to fight them constantly for your own way? Life was too short and human nature too weak for the stress and strain of such ceaseless resistance as she had made in the past few years against her family, the friends of her family, and the Church. For God's sake let her now have peace.

Yes, for God's sake. The words had come irreverently to her mind. But after all, could she or anyone else have peace except from God? and was there any other gift as sweet?

She knew there was one sure anodyne for her troubled spirit, and only one—the confessional. She had kept away too long already, for more than two years. She would go to-morrow, or perhaps the next day, and

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wash her soul clean. Father Hervey would talk to her as if to rip her heart strings out, but in the end he would leave her with peace, after she had promised and vowed to give up her mortal sin. Poor Mason, that meant him. She wept a few weak tears, then dried her eyes on the corner of the sheet.

So this was to be the end of her spiritual adventuring, the end of the free expression of her free being, and selfhood, and all those other valorous things she had rejoiced in.

She wasn't able any longer to go on with it. She must desert the army of women in the day of battle, the army led by Curie, Key, Pankhurst, Schreiner, Addams, Gilman, and cross over to the adversary, the encompassing Church. It would absorb her into its vast unity as a drop disappears in the sea. It would think for her and will for her. She would be animated with its life, not her own; but it would suffuse her with the comfort that is past understanding. She would eat the lotus and submit. She was not strong, like great people.

Perhaps the priest would suggest her return to Jim. But that wasn't in the law. He could only suggest and urge it. He could

Georgia Leaves Home

not insist on it. She couldn't go back to Jim, she couldn't, she couldn't. She sobbed as if there were a presence in the room which she hoped to move by her tears.

A clear vision of her husband came before her, as she had often seen him, sitting on the edge of this very bed, in undershirt and trousers, leaning forward, breathing abominably loud, his paunch sagging, unlacing his shoes. Right or wrong, good or bad, heaven or hell, that was one sight the priest should never make her see again. She hated Jim and loathed him forever.

As she was dressing next morning she called to Al to please go down and telephone for the doctor, for she knew she could never go through the day's work without medicine.

Presently Dr. Randall bowed up, a jolly stout man, smiling gayly and crinkling up the corners of his eyes, though he had slept just eight hours in the last seventy-two. The family was glumly finishing breakfast when he came. Throughout the meal Mrs. Talbot had been burningly aware of the contrast between decent, self-respecting women with a thought to themselves, and brazen young fly-by-nights in thin waists, who run after men

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and make themselves free; but she threw only a few pertinent remarks into the atmosphere, because the poor girl was so evidently out of sorts, with her high color and not touching a bite of food. Indeed, a body could hardly help feeling sorry for her, for all her wicked pride of will; very likely this sickness was a judgment on her for it.

When Dr. Randall had considered her pulse, her temperature and her tongue, and asked half a dozen questions, he told Al to send for a carriage and take her immediately to Columbus Hospital.

“Why, doctor,” exclaimed Mrs. Talbot, terrorized, “is it anything serious?”

“Typhoid—I’ll go telephone to let ’em know you’re coming.”

The doctor departed and Mrs. Talbot took Georgia on her lap and crooned over her until the carriage came.

THE LIGHT FLICKERS

It was decided that Georgia was to have a bed in a ward at eight dollars a week. Private rooms were twenty-five and they couldn't afford that during the month she would be laid up, particularly since her pay would stop automatically after her third day of absence. The office rule was very strict on that point.

She sat limply in the waiting room while Al was attending to her registration and her mother was upstairs with the nurse unpacking her things. On the opposite wall were a couple of windows, sharply framing vistas into the park across the street, and she saw two fragments of the path where she had often walked on Sunday mornings with Stevens.

It was this same wall in front of her which had seemed so sullen gray and prison-color from the other side and which had sometimes turned their talk to sombre things — death

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and immortality. From the inside, as she now saw it, the wall was not gray but cheerfully reddish brown, patterned vertically like a thrasher's wing.

Two pictures hung by the window, of the pope and of Frances Xavier Cabrini, founder of the order of nuns that conducted the hospital. They were photographs, she thought, or reproductions from photographs.

She looked closely at them, first at the old man, then at the old woman. She saw in them more than she had ever seen in such pictures before. They offered at least one positive answer to the riddle, perhaps the safest answer for such as she—to submit oneself through one's lifetime so as to attain at the end of it the matchless serenity of those two untroubled faces.

It came to her then in a moment of more than natural revelation, as it seemed, that she must seek the peace which these two had found.

She crossed slowly to the desk in the corner, to write what she knew might be the last of the thousands of letters she had written.

My dear, she began on the hospital paper, *I am here with,* not to cause him anxiety in

The Light Flickers

the beginning of his great enterprise, *a touch of the grip. Nothing serious. In haste and headache. Georgia.*

She paused. Even if it must end by her giving him up, she loved him. Should she, by an omission so significant, upset and distress him and perhaps hinder him in a task which, well performed, would bring great things to him, if never now to her? *I love you*, she added, *always.*

A second note she dated a week forward. *My dear, I haven't pulled around again as soon as I expected, but the rest has done me a world of good. Don't worry about me—they say I've a constitution like a horse. For my sake, make good, Mason—you've got to. With love, lots of it, always, G.*

A third she put two weeks ahead. *Dearest, I'm doing fine and will be out soon now. Your letters have been such a comfort. It's almost two thousand years since we've seen each other, isn't it? I love you, dear. Georgia.*

She put them in their envelopes, addressed them, and wrote 1, 2 and 3 respectively in the upper right hand corners in such a way that the stamps would conceal them. Al came in as she was finishing, and she ex-

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plained how she wanted them mailed a week apart. At first he refused, but at last was over-persuaded by her misery. He promised to do her errand as she asked, and kept his promise faithfully.

A page boy chanting "Mis-ter Stev-uns, Mis-ter Rigggle-hei-murr, Mis-ter An-droo Brown, Mis-ter Noise, Mis-ter Stevuns," caught Mason in the grill paying a lot of attention to a first vice-president over a planked tenderloin, German fried and large coffee. Accordingly he made his first report not to Silverman, but to the old man, thus:

Night Letter

548 ch jf 63

Kansas City Mo 10/17
Fredk. Tatton,

Eastern Life Insurance Co. 60 Monroe st., Chicago.

Strict confidence am engaged marry your secretary Georgia Connor who now sick columbus hospital please arrange hospital authorities give her best care private room special trained nurse my expense don't let her know my participation say attention comes from company gratitude her fidelity ability also keep her name payroll until return duty charge my account confidential my progress here satisfactory wire answer collect.

Stevens 814 AM

The Light Flickers

The old man himself had not been entirely immune to Georgia's charm, although in the office and before him she had steadily veiled her personality behind her status as a precise, prompt and well-lubricated appanage of a Standard Typewriter No. 4. So it was only a well subdued charm that the old man sensed in her, stimulating as a small glass of syrupy liqueur.

It seemed to him pathetic that the silent, presentable, self-respecting young woman, to whom for over a year now he had been revealing his most private, money-making thoughts almost as fast as they came to him, might never smile him another "good morning," agree with him pleasantly that it was hot or cold or wet, and get rapidly to work on his business.

She was so accustomed to his ways, and he hated the thought of breaking in another one—but, damn it, that wasn't all by any means, he liked the girl on her own account—she was such a little lady.

The old man did some rapid telephoning and was able to answer Stevens' wire half an hour after he got it.

Rebellion

Chicago Ills. Oct.18

Mr. Mason Stevens,

Hotel Boston, K C Mo

Best accommodations provided as stipulated salary continues your expense diagnosis simple case typical convalescence anticipated will wire promptly new developments regarding patient warm congratulations

Fredk. Tatton 949 AM

The old man naturally supposed that Mason knew the nature of Georgia's illness and was trying to reassure him, in a kindly way, that as typhoid cases go it was only a very little one.

Indeed, the old man, if he was a little lax later on in wiring all the developments in the case—because he didn't want to frighten the young man into throwing up his investigation in the very middle of it—was more valuably helpful in another way.

When the fever reached its crisis he got a great specialist out of bed for a three o'clock in the morning consultation over the little stenographer, and charged his costly loss of sleep to the company instead of to Mason Stevens, Mr. Silverman cordially approving.

They said afterwards that Georgia could not have taken another small step toward

The Light Flickers

death, without dying. She flickered and guttered like a lamp whose oil has been used up. For a few moments it seemed that her light had been put out altogether, but there must have been a tiny spark hidden somewhere in the charred wick, for the doctors brought her back by artificial stimulation, and you can not stimulate the dead.

If specialists and private rooms and nurses give sick people more chance of getting well, then Stevens and the old man and Mr. Silverman saved Georgia by their care of her, for she could not have had less chance to live and lived.

XVIII

THE PRIEST

The crisis of the fever came upon Georgia so suddenly that she had lapsed into semi-consciousness before the arrival of Father Hervey. She was able, in making her confession to him, barely to gasp out a few broken sentences of contrition.

He anointed with holy oil her eyes, ears, nostrils, lips, hands and feet, absolving her in the name of the Trinity from those sins which she truly repented.

When at last she came out of the shadow, her mother believed that it was the priest even more than the doctors who had saved her, for it is taught that the reception of Extreme Unction may restore health to the body when the same is beneficial to the soul.

A few days later the priest came again to see her and was amazed at the rapidity of her convalescence.

“You’re out of the woods this time, Geor-

The Priest

gia," he said, "sure enough. But I can tell you you had us frightened." He spoke with just the barest shade of a tip of a brogue, too slight to indicate in print.

His coat was shiny, his trousers slightly frayed at the bottom, and his shoes had been several times half-soled. A parish priest, throughout his life he had kept to the vow of personal poverty as faithfully as a Jesuit.

He stayed for half an hour and made himself charming. He asked the nurse not to leave the room, saying that he needed an audience. He had some new stories, he said, and he wanted to test them, which he couldn't do on Georgia alone, she was so solemn. Besides, she was almost sure to hash them up in repeating them, and he had a reputation to preserve. There was a shepherd in County Clare whose wife was from County Mayo, with the head of the color of a fox, inside and out. And so forth.

First the women smiled with him, then laughed, then roared. His touch was sure, his shading delicate, his technique perfected. He had them and he held them. It was excellent medicine for the sick he gave them.

Then he told them a little parish gossip

Rebellion

of wedding banns he thought he would shortly be requested to publish. His eyes twinkled at Georgia's astonished "You don't say—well, what she sees in him——" And he finished his pleasant visit with a couple of little anecdotes, each with a moral subtly introduced; simple tales of heroism and self-sacrifice that had lately come under his notice.

When he arose to go Georgia and the nurse bent their heads. He offered a short little prayer, gave them his blessing and departed.

He had not said a word in a serious way to Georgia of her affairs. But she knew that he was merely postponing.

Before his decisive interview with her he prayed earnestly for strength; for strength rather than guidance, for he felt no shade of doubt that the path which he would urge her to take was the right one. The Church had pointed it out long ago, and that settled it. He never questioned the wisdom or the inspiration of the great policies of the Church. He was none of your modernists, questioners and babblers; he was a veteran soldier, a fighting private in the army which will make no peace but a victor's.

The Priest

“Georgia,” he began, “do you feel strong enough for a serious talk? For if you don’t I will come later.”

She was sitting up in bed. Her skin had the translucent pallor of one whose life has hung in the balance. Her hair, braided and coiled about her head, had lost its peculiar gloss and become dry and brittle.

“Yes, Father; I am strong enough. As well have it over with now as any time.”

There was more of defiance in her words than in her heart, for she could not help being a little afraid of this gentle, gray old man with the Roman collar. Since her childhood he had stood in her mind for strange power and mystery. Even in her most rebellious days before her sickness she had not been willing to confront him. She had evaded him, run away from him. Now she could not run away.

“I have seen Jim since I was here last,” said he, “and——”

“Father, I know what you’re going to say—and a reconciliation is impossible.

“You know that he has stopped drinking?”

“Yes, I heard so.”

Rebellion

"It is true. He looks fine, fine. Brown and strong."

"I didn't think he ever could do it," said she, shaking her head. "He is fighting a battle he has lost so often."

"There is none who could help him so much in his struggle as you."

"Oh, there," she answered quickly and bitterly, "I think you are mistaken. He has paid very little attention to me or my wishes for four or five years past."

"Then," said the priest, "he has learned his lesson, for now he depends on you more than on any other person."

She did not answer, but closed her eyes and clenched her fists as tightly as she could, summoning her will to resist. But she realized that her will, like her body, was not in health. The sick bed is the priest's harvest time.

"My child," he said gently, "there is a human soul struggling for its salvation. Will you help or hinder it?"

"I do not think that is quite a fair way to put it."

"Not fair? With all my soul I believe it to be true. And, remember, in helping him

The Priest

to his salvation you are bringing your own nearer."

"But must we consider everything, everything from the standpoint of salvation? Of course, I want to go to Heaven when I die, but I want to be as happy as I can here on earth, too. And that's impossible if I live with Jim."

"If you had a child," he asked patiently, as if going clear back to the beginning again with a pupil that could not learn easily, "and he said to you, 'Mother, I don't want to go to school, for it makes me unhappy and I want to be as happy as I can,' would you let him have his way?" He paused, but she did not answer, so he went on to make his point clearer. "Of course you wouldn't if you loved your child. You would make him undergo discipline and accept instruction, if you wanted him to be a fine, strong, brave man. Our life on earth is but our school days—our preparation for the greater life to come. And we are not always allowed to seek immediate happiness any more than little children are."

She felt that she was being overcome in argument by the priest, as everyone must be

Rebellion

who accepts his fundamental premise, namely, that he is more intimately acquainted with the secrets of life and death than laymen are.

But far below the reach of argument and theological dialectics, which are surface things, from the deep springs of her life the increasing warning flowed up to her consciousness that it was the abomination of a slave to embrace where she did not love.

“Father,” she said, not trying to argue any longer, but just to make him see, “Oh, don’t you understand? Man and wife are so close together—like that.” She placed her two palms together before her in the attitude of prayer.

He raised his hand solemnly, to pronounce that phrase which perhaps more than any other has influenced human destinies, “*And they shall be two in one flesh.*”

“But to live so close with a man you don’t love or care for, oh, that is vile, utterly, utterly vile.”

He could not entirely sympathize with the intensity of her point of view. If one’s earthly love did not turn out as well as the dreams of it, in that it merely resembled other phases of mortal existence, to be submitted to. He

The Priest

knew many married couples that fell out at times, but if they tried to make the best of things as they were, on the whole they got along pretty well. He was inclined to deprecate the modern tendency to invest with too much dignity the varying shades of erotic emotion. It was one of the things which led to divorce—this beatification of earthly, fleshly love.

Had not the highest and holiest lives been led in the entire absence of it, by its ruthless extirpation? Not merely saints, martyrs and great popes, but ordinary priests like himself, ordinary nuns like the hospital sisters, had yielded up that side of life freely and been the better for it, more single-minded in the service of the Lord.

He did not believe that a woman who had met with disappointment in this regard should make of it such a monument of woe. Let her contemplate her position with a little more courage and resignation; let her not exaggerate the importance of her own personal feelings; let her yield up her pride and stubbornness and essay to do her duty in that relationship which she had chosen for herself, with the sanction of the Church.

Rebellion

Father Hervey had sat in a confessional box for nearly fifty years. He knew a very great deal about marriage from without. He had seen its glories and its shames reflected in the hearts of thousands. But he never felt its meanings in his own heart, at first hand.

Perhaps if its priesthood were not celibate, the Roman Church would not so unyieldingly insist upon the indissolubility of marriage. But if its priesthood were not celibate, the Roman Church would almost surely lose much of its grip upon the imagination. The mind of the average laymen, Catholic or not, cannot but be powerfully moved by the spectacle of a body of educated men, leaders in their communities, voluntarily renouncing the most appealing of human relationships for the sake of a supernatural ideal.

It is because the average man does not and cannot live without women which causes him to regard a priest with a species of awe. Reason as you will about it, justify the married clergy with the words of St. Paul and God's promptings within us, the fact remains that the Roman priest alone does what we can't do, lives as we couldn't live; he alone demonstrates that he is of somewhat different

The Priest

clay; he alone mystifies us; and mystery is the essence of sacerdotalism and authority.

"Georgia," resumed Father Hervey, "if all your pretty dreams have not come true, remember they never do in this life. You must learn to compromise."

"I will compromise, Father—that I will do, but I won't surrender utterly." She drew herself straighter up in bed, leaning forward without the prop of the pillow. Her excitement seemed to invigorate her. "There is another man——"

"Another man?" he asked sternly.

"Yes, but I will give him up. I love him, but I will give him up. On the other side, I will never take Jim back. That is my compromise."

"Is that not something like saying you would not commit murder, but would compromise on stealing?"

"Father, that is the best I can do."

"If he continued in his former evil ways," and there was an unusual tone of pleading rather than command in Father Hervey's voice, "I would not urge you to return to him. It is recognized that there are cases where living apart is advisable. But here is

Rebellion

poor Jim, doing his best and needing every helping hand, and you won't extend yours. It is not fair, Georgia, and it is not kind—to him or to yourself."

"I can't go back to him, Father. It is impossible. I hate him when I think of it. I can't live with him again. It is inconceivable. It is a horror to imagine." She averted her head and put her hands before her as if pushing away the image of her husband.

"In the top drawer of the bureau," she said, "you will find some letters—one for every day I have been here. They are from the other man. You may take them if you wish—and I will give you my promise to receive no more from him."

The priest felt as if he were touching unclean things when he took up Stevens' letters. There were more than twenty of them, and most of them were very thick.

"You have read them all?" he asked.

"Yes."

Father Hervey wrapped and tied the letters in a newspaper and rang for an attendant.

"Kindly put this package in the furnace,"

The Priest

he directed, "just as it is, without undoing it."

"You have wandered far," he said quietly, then took up his soft black hat and departed without prayer or blessing.

She sank back among her pillows, exhausted from the conflict. She had won, she told herself, she had won, but it was without joy.

She had definitely given up Mason, as she knew she must from the beginning of her sickness, from the day that she entered the hospital. Perhaps that had been part of the price of her getting well.

But she had also stuck to her purpose about Jim. She had refused to violate her natural feelings to the extent of entering into life's deepest intimacies with the one person in all the world whom she most disliked. She had put her will against the priest, the holy man, and she had not given in. She knew that not many women could have done that so openly and so successfully.

He had left her without prayer or blessing. She was not at peace with the Church which meant—her eyes fell upon the sacred picture on the wall opposite—which meant that she was not at peace with The Man

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whose mournful sufferings and woe had been
for her.

Fear slowly came over her.

SACRED HEART

The picture which she saw on the wall opposite, across the foot of the bed, was of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It was the thing which she had seen oftenest and looked at longest since she had been in the hospital. It hung directly before her eyes as she lay in bed with her head on the pillow. She saw it first on waking and last before sleeping. Sometimes when she awoke suddenly in the middle of the night she could feel the picture still there, watching her in the darkness with mournful eyes.

When first she looked at it she realized how crude it was in execution. Its colors were glaring. The Man wore a shining white cloak which he drew back to show underneath a blue garment. On this, placed apparently

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on the outside of it, was a Sacred Heart of red, girt in thorns. Holy flames proceeded from it, and there was a nimbus of encircling light.

She saw that it would have been better if the Sacred Heart had seemed to glow through His garment, instead of being obviously superposed upon it; that softer blue and grayer white and less scarlet red would have been truer tones for a religious picture. She took not a little pride in her critical perceptiveness.

But as she lay watching the picture day after day, she appreciated the superficiality of her first judgment of it. She had been looking at colored inks and the marks made by copper plates, not at a symbol of eternity.

Does one estimate a put-by baby's slipper, or a lock of someone's hair, or a wedding ring by its intrinsic worth? If the west side print shop which made the picture before her had failed, it could have done nothing else with that subject to portray. All attempts to represent Christ must fail. Rafael had failed. Everyone would fail.

Even the Church had failed. There had

Sacred Heart

been bad popes, had there not? But the Church had tried to represent Him. The Church had come nearer to doing so than any other enginery or person. The saintliest persons had belonged to her and died for her and in her.

One Church, she knew, He had founded, and left behind Him. One and but one. "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church." It was unequivocal. Christ did not say "churches," He said "church." There was but one which He had built.

And she had defied it; she had hardened her heart against it; she had sent away its appointed minister in order to exalt herself.

Her eyes were drawn again to the Sacred Heart, bound in the thorns which she and hers had placed there. So it had been, so it would be. Christ was crucified again each day, in the hearts of the people whom He loved. Had she not herself also given Him vinegar upon a sponge?

She felt the tears trickling down her cheeks as she thought of her own supreme selfishness, and she looked through blurred eyes at the representation of the most supremely un-

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selfish face that mankind has been able to conceive.

Then suddenly divine forgiveness seemed to descend upon her and level the bounds and limits of her ego; the barriers of her nature gave way and she found herself at one with all creation; she, and humanity, and nature, and God were together. Her soul seemed to quicken itself within her and ineffable light shone about her.

She fell on her knees at her bedside, her adoring eyes upon the pictured countenance of her Savior. Over and over again she repeated that wonderful word learned at the convent, which expresses all prayer in itself. "Peccavi," she prayed, "peccavi, peccavi."

It seemed to her at last, when she arose from her knees that she had washed all her sins away with the passion of her contrition; that she had been born again in the spirit and become pure. In her ecstasy she thought that the face of her dear Lord regarded her now less mournfully, and that there was joy in His smile where there had been only sorrow.

She knew for the first time in her self-

Sacred Heart

willed life the peace unspeakable of entire self-surrender. Her tears continued, but they were tears of joy, and she sobbed as sometimes prisoners sob when pardoned unexpectedly. The miracle of deliverance rolled over her soul like a flood, washing away the barriers of self-control.

During her weeks in the hospital she had lived in an atmosphere of perfect faith, as intense and vital, almost, as that of the middle ages. Those who had carried and comforted her through her sickness, nurses and gentle nuns, could not doubt that Christ had died to save them and to save her.

She was environed with Catholicism. Sometimes she could see through her partly opened door a black-coated priest passing in the hall to shrive a dying sinner. The chimes and chants from the chapel came faintly to her ears with benediction. The picture of the Sacred Heart hung before her eyes in unceasing reminder of the whole marvelous fabric of the Church.

Because of her lowered vitality and her days of idleness in bed, her receptivity to exterior impressions was greatly increased. The steady stream of suggestions of her

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ancient religion which had flowed in upon her welled higher and higher in her subconsciousness until they crossed the line of consciousness and took sudden and complete possession of her mind.

SURRENDER

The next morning Georgia sent for Jim. Before he came she wrote to Stevens:

Dear Mason—I am going to take my husband back. I have been here now for nearly a month, and I have had plenty of time to think things over, you may be sure. What I am going to do is best for both of us—for all three of us. There is no doubt of that in my mind. I know it.

Please don't answer or try to see me. That would simply make things harder for us, but not change my plans.

It is my religion that has done it, Mason. Do you remember that I once told you, when it came to the big things I didn't believe I would dare disobey? I was right in this respect that I can't bring myself to disobey, but it is not so much from fear as I thought it would be. It is a sense of "ought." That is the only way I can put it. I have a feel-

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ing, tremendously strong, but hard to define in words, that I ought not, that I must not go on with what we planned.

This feeling is stronger than I am, Mason. That is all I can say about it.

So good-bye. May God bless you and make you prosperous and happy in this life and the next one. This is my prayer, my dear.

Georgia.

The nurse took the letter to the mail box in the office and when she returned, looked at her patient curiously, saying, "Your husband is waiting downstairs to see you."

"Do you mind asking him to come up, nurse?"

Jim, who had now been in the city for a month, had lost some of his open-air tan and regained a portion of his banished poundage, but still he looked far better than Georgia had seen him for years. He made a favorable impression upon her from the instant he crossed the threshold. He was the Jim of the earlier rather than of the later years of their married life. His aspect seemed to confirm the truth of the revelation which she had received concerning him.

Surrender

"How do you do," she asked formally.

"Very well, thank you," he replied. "How do you do?"

"Much better—won't you be seated?"

Jim, first carefully placing his brown derby hat under the chair, sat where the priest had been the day before.

She felt a certain numbness of emotion as she looked at him, but none of that loathing and disgust without which, as she had come to believe, he could not be in her presence. Doubtless, she reflected, she had exaggerated her dislike for Jim, to justify herself for Stevens.

"Georgia," said Jim slowly, "I didn't act right before. I know it and I'm sorry and ashamed. It was drink that put the devil in me, same as it will for any man that goes against it hard enough. Some people can drink in moderation—it doesn't seem to hurt them. But I can't. When I got started I tried to drink up all the whiskey in North Clark Street. Well, it can't be done. I'm onto that now. No more moderate drinking for me. From now on I'm going to chop it out altogether."

He paused for a word of encouragement,

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but she remained silent. A little nodule of memory, which had been lying dormant in her brain, awoke at his words, "from now on I'm going to chop it out altogether." How many times she had heard him say that before—and every time he had thumped his right fist into his left palm, just as he was doing now.

"All I ask from you is another chance," he continued. "You know about the prodigal son. That's me. I've come back repentant. I know I've brought you misery in my time—and plenty of it. So if you stick on your rights and never forgive me, you don't have to. What do you say, Georgia?"

Again he paused, but she did not speak, sitting with her head bent, picking with her fingers at the coverlet.

"It wasn't me that did you the harm," he pleaded, "it was the whiskey in me, and if I keep away from that why the rest of me isn't so bad. You used to think that yourself once, Georgia."

She waited for him to continue, fearing what he would say next, and he said it. "But if you're through with me, I guess the only friend I've got left after all is whiskey. He

Surrender

put me to the bad all right, but he won't go back on me now I'm there. Whatever else you can say about him, he's faithful. He's always got a smile for you when you're blue, and he'll stick to you clear through to the finish."

Yes, that was Jim of old, word for word and motive for motive, who thought the proper remedy for disappointment was drunkenness.

"Oh, Jim," she cried, "why did you say that?"

He misunderstood her completely. He felt that he was making a most effective threat. "I said it because it's true," he answered roughly, "that's why. You've showed me where I stand—you've given me my answer just as loud as if you'd been shouting it. Good-bye. Likely I'll be laying up in a barrel house on the river front pretty soon, and pretty soon after that they'll be taking me out to Dunning and planting me in the ground with just a little stick and a number on it, or else—" a catch came into his voice as the pathetic picture swam vividly before his eyes, for like most drunkards he possessed something of the artistic temperament, "or

Rebellion

else maybe they'll cut me up to show the young internes and the trained nurses which side the heart's on."

Yes, he was doing the baby act again, making excuses and threatening suicide. He might have deceived Al and Father Hervey for a month or more with his "reform," but he couldn't deceive her for ten consecutive minutes. She had seen into the core of his nature, that it was weak and unstable as ever. Sooner or later he would relapse. What had been would be again.

He arose as if to leave, then hesitated to give her one last chance to relent.

"S'long," he said, slowly opening the door.

"You can come home, Jim—if you want."

"If I want!" He went to her quickly and took her in his arms and pressed his lips to her cold ones until she shuddered in his embrace.

When at last he left her she looked to the picture of the Sacred Heart as if for approval, and whispered, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

WORSHIP

A few days later Georgia was discharged from the hospital with the warning that she was convalescent, but not cured. She might by indiscretion in the ensuing weeks make herself a semi-invalid for the rest of her life; she might even bring about an acute relapse, in which case she would be likely to die.

She telephoned the old man that she was ready to report the following Monday, but he ordered her to stay away for at least another week, saying that her place was absolutely safe and her salary running on. She thanked him so earnestly for his kindness that he was minded to break into her secret, congratulate her on her engagement, tell her it was Stevens who had been kind and generous, but according to his promise he refrained. He supposed she would quickly discover the facts after their marriage anyway.

Jim was rodman with the surveying de-

Rebellion

partment of an important landscape gardening firm. Sometimes his employment kept him out in the country for two or three days at a time, but he turned in ten or twelve dollars every Saturday night and the family was more comfortable than it had ever been.

Georgia had in fairness to acknowledge that Jim had shown unexpectedly decent feeling. During her fortnight of convalescence he had assumed no right of proprietorship, made no demands. He slept on a lounge in the front room and never went to her room without first knocking. She wished that things might go on so indefinitely, but she knew that it was now a question of days, perhaps of hours, before she must reassume all the obligations of wifehood. She was getting well so rapidly and so evidently that soon she would have no excuse for not meeting them.

She was grateful to Jim for his courtesy; and they spoke to each other more kindly than ever before. They had ceased to act upon the theory that it did not much matter what one said to the other since the other had to stand it anyway. She had already

Worship

taken over a year out of their lives together to show that she did not have to stand it.

Their example was not without its influence upon the other members of the family, Al and Mrs. Talbot, and there was far less wrangling and friction in the household.

Not without hesitating dread Georgia brought herself to the grilled shutter of Father Hervey's Gothic confessional box. She had been derelict in this as in other obligations; except for her brief and half delirious words of general contrition in the hospital, it was her first confession for three years.

Sinking to her knees she whispered, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

She began the prayer of the penitent. "I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael, the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault."

As she told her secret sins and pettiness to the priest, it seemed that the poison of them was being drained from her memory

Rebellion

where they had become encysted. Her heart was cleaned and purified and lightened by the process of the confessional.

It is indeed doubtful whether any other ecclesiastical instrument since the world began has lifted so much sorrow from mankind.

Georgia's conspicuous and mortal sins were two—Doubt and her continued entertainment of that feeling for Mason Stevens which, since it was unlawful, the Church denominated Lust.

Doubt had followed naturally on absorption in worldly affairs, dangerous associations and reading, and neglect of her obligations to the Church. Especially reprehensible had been her frequent attendance at the Sunday Evening Ethical Club, where the very air was impregnated with dilute agnosticism.

In future she must be more careful in her choice of reading. Materialism and atheism were skillfully concealed in many a so-called sociological treatise. Not that sociology lacked certain elements of truth, but the danger for untrained minds lay in exaggerating their importance until they overshadowed greater truths. She would do well hereafter to leave sociology to sociologists.

Worship

The Sunday Evening Ethical Club was anathema. She must not go there again nor to any similar place where veiled socialism and anarchy were preached.

The confessor was rejoiced that her duty toward her husband and toward herself, for the two duties were one, had been so unmistakably revealed to her. Did the image of the other man ever trouble her mind?

Yes, Georgia acknowledged it did.

That was to be expected, in the beginning. But it would cease to trouble her before long. Did this image occur to her often?

Yes, she said, it did—very often, almost continually. It was not always actively before her, she explained, but it seemed never far away, as if it were just beneath the surface of her ordinary thoughts.

In that case it would be impossible to absolve her and she would remain in a state of mortal sin unless she would promise solemnly to refrain from all further thoughts of that man, and if ever they arose unbidden to banish them immediately, as an evil spirit is cast out from one possessed.

The priest waited, but the woman remained silent.

Rebellion

Did she remember, he asked severely, the words of our Savior, that "he who looketh in lust, committeth adultery." If she kept this idol in her heart, no priest had power to forgive her sins in His name. Her choice was before her, her Lord or her flesh.

Her head was bowed, her hands clasped before her, and she felt tears trickle slowly upon her knuckles.

"Oh, I promise, Father," she whispered, "to try never to think of him any more, and to put him out of my mind—when—the thought comes—unbidden."

The sincerity of her intention was evident in the tones of her voice and she was offered her penance; to be hereafter scrupulous in her religious observances; to hear one mass a week besides the Sunday mass for two months; to say her prayers night and morning always reverently on her knees, not standing or in bed; with the addition of five Our Fathers and Hail Marys night and morning until her penance was completed; to endeavor to influence her family to go with her to Sunday mass each week; and to examine her conscience daily.

The wise and gentle old priest had not been

Worship

harsh with her, and she accepted humbly and gratefully the penance he imposed.

He prayed to God to regard her mercifully and to lead her to eternal life, then raising his right hand he recited over her the consecrated syllables of the sacrament, ending with the solemn words of peace, *Ego te absolvo a peccatis in nomine Patris*, here he made the sign of the cross, *et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.* (I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.)

Georgia left the confessional and went to the other part of the church to pray for a clean and strengthened spirit.

The Sunday following she went with Jim, Al and Mrs. Talbot to the cathedral where pontifical mass was celebrated. Encrusted with the accumulated observances of centuries of faith, it is, perhaps, the most intricate, aesthetic and impressive religious rite ever practiced by mankind.

From the archbishop seated on his throne, wearing his two-horned mitre in sign of the two testaments, his emerald ring as spouse of the Church, his silken tunic and dalmatic, his gloves of purity; with his shepherd's crosier

Rebellion

in his hand, his woolen pallium over his shoulders, bound with three golden pins in memory of the three nails which fastened Him; from the archbishop crowned with gold to the least acolyte in surplice of white to recall His life, and cassock of black to recall His sorrow, the hierarchical symbolism is complex, mysterious, complete, beautiful.

When Georgia, genuflecting and signing herself with holy water, passed through the cathedral's double doors which prefigure the two sides of His being, she felt as if she were coming home again after a long, unhappy journey. The clustered shafts of the columns carried her eyes up to the high, darkened groins of the roof. The south sun streamed in colors through the saints of the windows. In the east, on the altar, the tall slender candles burned purely.

The incense puffed from the swinging censer, like smoke, familiar and pleasing to her. When the priest nine times uttered Kyrie eleison, the prayer of fallen humanity, she felt as if a friend were interceding for her before a great judge.

It made her proud to see the slow evolutions of the choir, regular and disciplined, to

Worship

hear as if far away their solemn chants in stately Latin, to feel that she belonged to the same fabric of which they were a part.

As the service proceeded, the priests passing back and forth before the altar making obeisance and kissing its holy stone in ancient and regular form, the world outside receded continuously further from the people in the church, and they became increasingly merged into one single, splendid act of worship.

Holding the jewelled paten with its bread, above the jewelled chalice with its wine, the archbishop made three signs of the cross to commemorate the living hours of the crucifixion; then moving the paten he made two signs to signify the separation of His soul and body. The altar bell tinkled, a symbol of the convulsion of nature in that supreme hour. A great sigh went through the Church.

Upon the altar before them was Christ Himself. What had been bread was now become His real body; what had been wine was now become His actual blood. . . . It is the great miracle of Christian practice. Whether it actually takes place, whether it is a true miracle or a false one, is a question which with its implications has slain, im-

Rebellion

poverished and dishonored many millions of human beings, half of whom perhaps believed that the miracle happened and half of whom believed that it did not.

Georgia and Jim, having fasted from the night before, received communion.

Mrs. Talbot from her pew in the middle of the church, as she watched them kneeling together at the altar rail, was happier than she had been for many years.

KANSAS CITY

Kansas City is growing vain and beautiful. She has, within recent years, spent ten million dollars on her looks—not to increase her terminal facilities or make her transit rapider—but simply and solely on her looks, to clear up her complexion and improve her figure.

Beauty pays dividends to towns, as to women and gardeners. Since Kansas City put in its park and boulevard system for ten million, adjoining real estate has advanced twelve, or according to the inhabitants, fifteen million.

Mason Stevens decided he would like to get transferred to Kansas City, with a raise of salary. Then he could pick out a small house in the trees at the end of one of the new macadam roads, and eventually go back and forth in a Panno Six just as he had planned. He put in a good many odd hours with the maps and prospectuses of proposed, suggested or hoped for subdivisions.

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If he could arrange with Mr. Silverman to shift him, he would send for Georgia and they would scout for a lot near a boulevard end. The land out there was bound to appreciate in value as the town built up and the parkways were still further extended. He would like to buy one lot for himself and another for investment. He would have to buy on time, but that's an incentive to a young business man.

He felt confident of Georgia's enchantment with the project. The view from the bluffs was finer than anything one could get in Chicago for the same money. Besides the process of social stratification was not so far along. Kansas City was to Chicago as Chicago to New York, and New York to London. Comers-up, like himself and Georgia, would be more important more quickly in the smaller city.

Mason soon found out that there was not much to be said against Mr. Plaisted, the local agent in chief, except that he was getting old. In routine matters and methods he was excellent, but had ceased to be creative. In the terminology of a great art, he had lost his wallop.

Kansas City

It was the time when the big life companies were beginning their drive to get business in block; to insure for one large premium paid in a lump sum, the entire working force of a bank or business house. When the employe was honorably retired, say at sixty or sixty-five, after a stipulated number of years of steady work, he would be pensioned until he died, which pension might in whole or in part be continued to his wife if she survived him. Or he might receive, upon superannuation, an endowment equaling three years' salary. If he died before retirement his relict might become the beneficiary of an ordinary life policy. There were still other plans and combinations and permutations thereof, whose details were more or less veiled in a haze of actuarial figures, but whose broad effects were alike calculated to incite fidelity in the employe by holding out to him the prospect of a comfortable decline if he stuck to his employer through youth and middle age.

Mason quickly reported to Mr. Silverman that within six months the New England Life had written two such block policies for corporations and that three other rival com-

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panies had secured one each, while the Eastern had obtained none.

Silverman telegraphed sharply to Plaisted, "Why don't you get any corporation business in bulk? Our competitors do."

Mr. Plaisted responded with a laborious letter of explanation.

Then it developed that the New England Life had things already in shape for a third big deal—the Phosphate National Bank. Mason got the first wind of it, not in Kansas City, but by a direct tip from Mr. Silverman in New York, with instructions to investigate promptly. Within six hours he was able to report back that the proposed premium would exceed five thousand dollars a year, and furthermore that the Phosphate Trust & Savings, being controlled by the same parties as the Phosphate National, was preparing to follow its lead. That would make four banks for the New England in half a year and greatly increase its already disturbing prestige.

Silverman answered, "Immediately use all proper methods secure Phosphate business for us. We must maintain prestige. Au-

Kansas City

thorize you act independently Plaisted your discretion. Draw on me in reason."

Mason drew on him for one thousand dollars, and obtained two five hundred dollar bills, one of which, after duly cautious preliminaries, he handed to the cashier, the other to the auditor of the Phosphate National. Again, after duly cautious preliminaries, they accepted. These two gentlemen had been detailed a committee to draw up for the convenience of the bank's Board of Directors an analytical syllabus of the differing propositions offered by the competing insurance companies. The Eastern Life got the Phosphate National's business, followed by that of its subsidiary, the Trust & Savings Bank, and Mason got Mr. Silverman's congratulations.

Two days later Silverman walked unexpectedly into Plaisted's office. Plaisted, who had just that instant signed his name to a letter addressed to his visitor in New York, was rattled.

"Mr. Plaisted," said Mr. Silverman, biting off the end of a three-for-a-dollar, "I have found out what is the trouble, that is, the main trouble with your agency here."

Plaisted winced. He hadn't realized that

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there was any trouble, and certainly not any main trouble with his agency. "Yes, Mr. Silverman."

"You're undermanned."

"Why, yes—perhaps. I've thought of breaking in a few new agents this winter."

"No," said Silverman, "I mean you're undermanned at the top. Weak on the executive side."

"Oh," said Plaisted.

"You need new blood, new ideas, new life, hustle," he snapped his fingers with each successive word—"speed—force—energy—vigor—enterprise—vitality—dynamics—do you get me?"

"I—yes—I'm sure I do," answered Plaisted, in considerable apprehension.

"I suggest therefore that you appoint young Stevens—you have met him?"

"Yes," answered Plaisted, who detested the ground Mason walked on, "I have met him."

"I suggest you appoint him as your first assistant," remarked Mr. Silverman, calmly eyeing Plaisted. "He will take the burden of details off your shoulders."

"I—ah—don't know, Mr. Silverman, if

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that would be entirely wise. You see our methods—his and mine—”

“I have made my suggestion, Mr. Plaisted,” answered Silverman slowly. “In my judgment that would be the best thing to do.”

The two men looked at each other until at last Plaisted dropped his eyes murmuring, “I will think it over.”

“I leave at two. I should like to know your decision before then.”

Plaisted yielded by telephone within half an hour.

He wasn't deprived of the corner room; he would continue to sign *General Agent* after his name. But he realized bitterly that he had left to him only the shadow of his long authority. The substance had passed to the young stranger.

At the beginning of the following year Plaisted was granted a six months' leave of absence with pay, and soon after his return resigned. He now travels peevishly from Palm Beach to Paris and back again in company with a valet-nurse.

Georgia's letter of farewell came in the afternoon mail, just after Mr. Silverman's

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departure. Mason read it over every night for a month and found it bad medicine for sleep. The lines in his shrewd face deepened perceptibly. Finally he locked the letter up in his safe deposit vault, and seemed to rest better afterwards.

He dickered with the hotel for room and bath by the year and got thirty-three per cent off. He was known by his office force as a hard man to please.

XXIII

THE LAST OF THE OLD MAN

Georgia pressed the knob of the time clock at fifteen minutes to nine the next morning. When she opened her locker to hang up her hat and jacket she discovered a novel which she had drawn from a circulating library six weeks before and which had been costing her two cents a day ever since, a box of linen collars, an umbrella she thought she had lost, and a shirt waist done up in paper.

She went from the locker hall into the room of the office, half expecting to find it changed in some way, but everything was the same. The same clerks were stoop-shouldered over the same desks, the same young auditor was lolling back in his swivel chair, pulling his stubby mustache, his elbow on the low mahogany railing that marked him off from his assistants. That was how he always began the day. At nine precisely he would ring for a stenographer and dictate from notes. He

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never dictated straight from his head, probably because his work was so full of figures.

Georgia was taken back by the casual way in which she was greeted. Several arose and shook hands and were briefly glad to see her again; others simply nodded a good morning. An oldish bookkeeper asked, "Been away, haven't you?"

The girls of the lunch club, however, welcomed her warmly as they came in one after the other and found her seated at her old desk, just outside the old man's door. But even they, she felt with a twinge of bitterness, failed to grasp the stupendousness of her experience.

Since last she had been in the office she had knocked at the gate of death and lost her lover and found her faith, yet the people of the office seemingly perceived no change in her except that she was pale.

All that they knew of her was the surface and that, she reflected, was all she knew of them. Perhaps during her absence the oldest bookkeeper had received notice to quit at the end of the year and dreaded to tell his invalid wife; perhaps he had had a daughter die, not recover, from typhoid; or his son had gone to

The Last of the Old Man

prison or received a hero medal or become a licensed aviator.

The young auditor might be frowning and pulling his mustache because he had recently acquired a chorus lady for a stepmother. The tall, red-puffed girl with the open-work waist and abrupt curves might, as had been suspected, be no better than she should be. It wouldn't surprise Georgia greatly if that was so.

But, she reflected, what of it? None of them mattered to her, just as she mattered to none of them.

For everyone she supposed it was much the same; four or five people one knew and the rest strangers.

She slipped some paper into the machine to try her fingers. She wrote hadn't, "hand't" and stenographer, "stonegrapher." She was not pleased to find whoever had been subbing for her had put a black ribbon on her machine. She liked purple better.

Mechanically she pulled at the upper left-hand drawer where she had kept her note books and pencils. but it was locked. And she

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didn't have the key. She had sent it by Al from the hospital.

Miss Gerson walked briskly to the desk. "Oh," she said, "Miss Connor, you're back."

"Yes. How do you do?" They shook hands.

"That's fine—you do look a little pale—we were all so sorry to hear of your illness. I've been your understudy," she gave a little sigh, "using your desk. I'm afraid its cluttered up with my things. If I'd only known you were returning to-day I'd have left it spick and span for you." She took out the key and unlocked the master drawer, which released the others, and removed her notebook, pencils, erasers, some picture postal cards, a broken-crystalled lady's watch, an apple and a book on etiquette.

"I think the old man's just fine to work for, don't you?" she asked as she collected her belongings.

"Indeed I do," said Georgia jealously. "Will you be at the club for lunch to-day?"

"Indeed I will," responded Miss Gerson, departing.

The telephone tinkled on Georgia's desk.

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"Hello," came the voice, "is this Miss Gerson?"

"Did you wish to speak to her personally?"

"I wish to speak with Miss Gerson, Mr. Tatton's secretary."

"This is his secretary," said Georgia.

"This is St. Luke's hospital," said the voice. "Mr. Tatton wants you to take a cab and come right down here to see him, and say—hello—I'm not through—bring your typewriter. Right away."

The old man was propped up in a chair, fully dressed, when Georgia arrived. "Oh, Miss Connor," he said when he saw her, "I wasn't expecting you. All the better, though. Glad you're well again. I'm not." He held his hand to his side and seemed to have difficulty with his breathing.

"Take this," he said. "Date it and write: Codicil. And I hereby declare and publish, being of sound mind and body, and in the presence of witnesses, that I do now revoke and cancel and make of no effect and void, in whole and in part, the clause numbered seven—then put also figure seven in parenthesis—in the foregoing instrument, will and

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testament of date July second, nineteen hundred and five. I expressly withdraw and withhold all the bequests therein made, named and stipulated."

Georgia took his words directly on the machine. A nurse and an interne witnessed his signature.

"Now," said the old man, "take this in shorthand, to my wife, care Platz & Company, Bankers, 18 Rue Scribe, Paris, France.

"Dear Marion: Except for those three pleasant days last summer we haven't seen each other for six years, and as you will know long before you read this, we shan't see each other alive again.

"I deeply regret that, especially of later years, our marriage has been so unsuccessful. I apprehend clearly that the fault lay with me insofar as I—quote—had grown so very prosy—end quote—as you remarked last summer.

"My last wish is that you will bring Elsie home and keep her here until she marries some decent American with an occupation. Underline those last three words, Miss Connor. She is now a young woman of seventeen, and it was evident to me last summer

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that her head is fast becoming stuffed with nonsense. She is learning to look down on her country and her countrymen and mark my words—underline mark my words, Miss Connor—if you encourage her to marry some foreign scamp she will be very unhappy. I know you don't agree with these views, but I know they are sound, and if you keep Elsie over there you will live to see that proved; although I hope not.

“Give my love to Elsie and remind her of her old dad now and then.

“Good-bye, Marion. You and Elsie are the only women I ever loved.

“That's all, Miss Connor. Now what I want you to do is this: If I don't come out of this operation—appendicitis—please write that up and mail it. Just sign it Fred. If I do get well, destroy your notes and don't send the letter.

“Oh, you better add a postscript—P. S. I am dictating this because I have neither the time nor the strength to write myself. I was attacked suddenly.”

Two nurses and a doctor who had been waiting now gathered about the old man, lifted him gently to the bed and began to

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undress him. He held out his hand. "Good-bye, Miss Connor," he said.

He died, and Georgia sent the letter to his wife.

THE NEW KING

Samuel Cleever, a tall, thin dyspeptic with a pince-nez and English intonation, was moved from Newark, N. J., to succeed the old man.

His first conference with Georgia was brief.

"Good morning, Miss Ah-ah."

"Connor."

"Quite so. Do you understand the Singer cross-filing reference system?"

"I understand cross-indexing and card-catalogues."

"The Singer system specifically, do you know that?"

"No, sir."

"So I feared."

"But I could learn quickly."

"Quite so. But to be frank," said Mr. Cleever, "I have brought my private secretary with me from Newark." New kings make new courts.

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"Yes, sir," said Georgia in a low voice.

"I will assign you to the auditing department for the present."

"Yes, sir."

She felt many eyes upon her and her cheeks were burning as she walked down the long room carrying her business belongings to a narrow flat-top which the young auditor pointed out to her. It was next the inside wall.

The color came to her face in waves as she passed Miss Gerson's desk and she had a furious sensation that her habit of blushing was damnable. Why, she asked herself angrily, couldn't she at least appear calm in unpleasant situations?

Her new work was less interesting, more mechanical. There were rows on rows of figures in it, and much technical accounting jargon. She ceased to throw in overtime to the company, quitting sharply each night on the dot of five thirty. On pay night she found, as she had feared, that her salary had been standardized. She received the regular class A stenographer's \$15 instead of the private secretary's \$20.

On Tuesday of her second week in the au-

The New King

ding department, Mr. Cleever sent for her. Hoping devoutly that the new secretary had sprained his wrist (Mr. Cleever's secretary was a young man, Mrs. Cleever having been a stenographer herself), Georgia took her notebook.

But Mr. Cleever wanted instead to inform her that the system of bookkeeping whereof she was the apparent beneficiary disaccorded with his notions of system.

Since that remark seemed to leave her in the dark, he tossed across his table to her a report from the auditor's department which showed that in the past seven weeks she had been credited with \$140 which had been debited to Mason Stevens, also that Columbus Hospital bills for \$129.60 (including extras) had been paid by the company and charged to Stevens, and that a doctor's statement for \$300 had been settled by the company and charged to Mr. Silverman's private fund. As to the last item, Mr. Cleever explained he, of course, had nothing to say, but as to the other two, although he had neither the desire nor the right to inquire into her personal affairs or her conduct out of the office, he must henceforth make it an un-

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deviating rule not to permit the use of the company's books to facilitate private financial transactions between employes.

As Mr. Cleever's precise syllables clicked on, she looked from him to the two page report in her hand, and back again to him. Her lips were partly open and she breathed through them.

When he spoke of his desire not to inquire into her conduct out of the office, she thought she distinguished a discreet sneer in his modulated voice.

She knew instantly that it was out of the question for her to remain in the place. The report she held had been typewritten by a woman in her own department. It would spread from her to the other women and then to the men. Her engagement to marry Stevens could never now be announced in explanation. She would be construed as she herself had construed the tall, red-headed girl with the abundant figure.

She felt a flood rush over her face, suffusing it to the roots of her hair. She saw that Cleever saw it, and that he took it for confirmation of his suspicions.

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"Mr. Cleever, I assure you I never knew anything of this until this moment."

"Of course, Miss Connor," he responded drily. "Please understand I make no criticism of the method of my predecessor. But in future—"

"It will stop, Mr. Cleever. I wish to hand in my resignation."

"We are sorry to lose you, Miss Connor, but of course if that is your decision—"

"Yes, sir, it is."

He bowed slightly. "Then at the end of the week, Saturday?"

"Yes, sir, Saturday night."

He again bowed slightly to signify that it was understood and that their talk was ended.

She took her lunch hour to write to Mason. She put many sheets in the machine and crumpled them into the waste basket in accomplishing this:

Dear Mason: I have just learned of your kindness to me at the hospital. Thank you for the thought.

I find that I owe you \$269.60, which I will repay in installments. I enclose \$12 for first

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installment. I regret that I am unable to pay it all at once. I am leaving the office. Please don't write.

Congratulations on your success.

Sincerely,

Georgia Connor.

She felt as she dropped the note in the mail chute that Mason was a man to love. Imagine Jim doing her a great service and keeping it quiet. Jim took his affections out in words and physical embrace. Jim—she caught herself up suddenly. This wasn't being resigned, as she had prayed God she might be.

She answered half a dozen want ads before she could get the upset price she had determined on—eighteen dollars. She covenanted for this finally with a frowsy looking, bald little lawyer, in an old-fashioned five-story, pile-foundationed, gray stone building on Clark street, put up soon after the fire. The windows were seldom washed and there were two obsolete rope elevators.

The little lawyer, Mr. Matthews, had a large single room in which he sublet desk-room to a pair of young real-estaters.

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Georgia didn't like the looks of the place, but inasmuch as Mr. Matthews didn't haggle an instant about her salary, she took it.

She had nothing important to do. Mr. Matthews' mind was fussy and unsystematic. He had little business and set her to copying over his briefs of bygone years. "Codifying," he called it; why she never knew.

She shrewdly suspected she was engaged rather as a "front" to impress clients than to work at her trade.

Whenever a visitor, whether collector or suspender peddler, came to see Mr. Matthews, that attorney bade him sit a few minutes while he finished up a letter that had to catch the Twentieth Century or the five thirty Pennsylvania Limited, as the case might be. Then he would fake a letter and Georgia would help him at the end by inquiring, "Special delivery, I suppose, sir?"

It answered her purpose for the time being, but she hadn't the vaguest intention of staying. She saw there was no future.

Mr. Matthews each morning requested her to oblige the young real-estaters by "helping them out" with their correspondence.

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“Helping them out” meant doing it all. Mr. Matthews was brimming with euphemisms. Likewise they, the real-estaters, got to asking her to “help out” their friends, which she good-naturedly did—in hours.

Saturday Mr. Matthews didn’t turn up, nor yet Monday. Tuesday when Georgia suggested her payment, he said he was expecting a check that afternoon. Thursday, when she insisted on it, he told her to collect half from the real-estaters, since she had been working for them as much as for him.

She couldn’t see it that way at all. He had engaged her.

He fell into legal phraseology. “Qui facit per alium,” or something of the sort; and she told him nettly she wasn’t a fool and that if he didn’t pay her immediately she would attach his furniture.

He turned his pockets inside out, showing a ten-dollar bill and eighty-five cents. She took the bill and walked out. But it wasn’t much of a triumph. Her wages during her employment by Mr. Matthews had averaged six dollars a week.

She was therefore unable to send Mason another installment; and couldn’t help being

The New King

relieved because, despite her injunction, he had written her.

“Dear Mrs. Connor: Please do not hurry at all in that matter. Indeed, I would be pleased to consider it an investment bringing in 5%, or if you prefer, 6% a year. If you pay me \$16.18 annually (or \$4.18 more during the balance of the current year), that would be an advantageous business arrangement for me. I hope you may see your way clear to agreeing to this.

“With kind regards,

“Very truly,

“Mason Stevens.”

JIM REËNLISTS

Georgia smiled a little woefully over the transparent intention of Stevens' letter. He was so obviously trying to do her a great kindness and disguise it as business by his talk of six per cent.

She knew that with young men and small sums interest rates lose their meaning. Everybody would rather have a quarter down than a cent a year forever. Any young hustler on a salary would rather have \$270 cash than an unsecured promise of \$16 annually.

Oh, he was naïve and boyish as ever to think she wouldn't promptly penetrate his little plan. She had always seen through his various tricks and stratagems in regard to her from the very beginning. She didn't remember one time when he had fooled her successfully. It was like having a young son who hardly needs to talk to you at all, you

Jim Reënlists

can read his mind so easily as it runs along from thing to thing.

She went to a newspaper office to answer one advertisement and insert another. The one she answered was for "A rapid typist—beginners not wanted. State name, experience, age, education." A blind address was given. "Y 672," care of the paper. She wrote an appreciative account of her talents, but was grieved to discover that Y 672 was none other than the Eastern Life Assurance Company. Evidently Mr. Cleever was going in for many changes.

Ten days later she was with a mail order house, in a huge reënforced concrete block-like building, just across the river on the west side. The roof of this enormous edifice, according to advertisement, covered 99 acres of floor space, or some such dimension. The firm didn't do a retail business in Chicago, so everything was rough and ready. The clerks worked in their shirt sleeves, usually blue ones. They were a bigger, thicker-necked lot than the downtowners, and freer-tongued before the women. She wasn't at all disconcerted, however, by any amount of the "damns" and "hells."

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She was described on the books of the company as "Stenographer; Class A; Female; First six months' of employment; salary \$12." The understanding was that if she made good she would be promoted, and this she promised herself to do, but didn't.

The advertisement which Georgia put in the paper was:

TO RENT—2667 Pearl Ave., beautiful double front room, near lake and park; single gentleman; breakfast if desired; reasonable. Connor, third flat.

Mrs. Talbot could not be brought to lowering caste by taking a roomer until Georgia explained about her debt to Mason. This veered the older woman's mind violently about, and she began immediately to figure if it wouldn't be possible to squeeze in two persons instead of one—which proposition Georgia promptly vetoed.

Jim acquiesced gloomily in the loss of the front room. He didn't see why paying Stevens' interest at six per cent wouldn't satisfy the nicest sense of honor. Six per cent was a good investment for anybody. Lord knows he wished someone was paying it to him. He would feel ashamed to have

Jim Reënlists

a visitor shown back to the dining room instead of forward to the parlor.

Al alone contemplated the subject with equanimity. He dismissed it by saying that it wouldn't get him anything one way or the other. To him the parlor meant the place where the family gathered together after supper to bore him. He'd rather sit in a back room and chin with the crowd across a round, yellow, slippery table, or go across to Jonas' and try to win a little beer money at Kelly pool. He seldom analyzed his emotions; he simply knew it was fun to squat down by the rectangular green cloth table, squint his eye, and sight his shot, while the crowd watched him through the cigarette smoke, then to straighten up decisively as if he had solved the problem, tip his hat back, whistle through his teeth, chalk his cue and put the ball in. Contrariwise it was darned little fun in the front room after supper.

The applicant for lodging with whom Georgia finally agreed on terms was Mr. Cyrus Kane, copy reader on an afternoon newspaper. He was a widower of forty-five, quiet, neat and regular pay. He never once had a visitor to see him. He didn't kick.

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But to balance all these excellent qualities was one major drawback: his unalterable condition was that he should be served in bed with a pot of black coffee at five o'clock each morning. He explained he had to be at the office at six, and that he couldn't stir without coffee; in fact, he said he was a regular caffeine fiend. Georgia hesitated, then added a dollar and a half to her price, which he accepted, agreeing to pay \$5.50 a week.

Mrs. Talbot paled a trifle when informed that she had been elected to arise at 4:45 A. M. every day and set Mr. Kane's coffee on the gas ring until it was hot enough to take in to him. But she agreed because she felt that so she was helping to clear Georgia's honor. On the first Sunday morning of this stay Mrs. Talbot missed the coffee because she knew that Mr. Kane's paper didn't publish that day and supposed, or anyway hoped, that he would sleep late. At six the whole family was awakened by his loud mutterings to himself which percolated through the flat.

"They agreed to bring my coffee at five; they *agreed*; and here it is near seven and not a sign of it. *Not a sign* of it. — it. I'll leave, yes by — I'll leave!" He

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thrashed about furiously in his bed, turning over and over, and striking the pillow with clenched fists in his rage.

Mrs. Talbot, in sack and skirt over her nightgown, stockingless, her gray hair loose, went running in to him with his pot of steaming black dope. He smiled cherubically when he saw her. It was the only trouble they ever had with him.

On Mr. Kane's coming Jim had to clear out of the front room, so he went to Georgia's.

That evening as she undressed rapidly in the light before his approving eyes she had a sudden strange relieved feeling that after what she had been through in the past few months a little more wouldn't greatly matter one way or the other.

It would certainly be unpleasant to have Jim pawing her again, but she had successfully postponed it much longer than she expected, so now she had better be philosophical about it. As far as she could gather most women obliged their husbands and not themselves in the frequency of their embraces.

Why, therefore, excite her imagination and her sense of horror, and try to make a tre-

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mendous hard luck story out of what after all was a perfectly common and commonplace situation? Let her avoid it whenever possible and accept it with calm equanimity when necessary.

It was rather ridiculous to think herself a shrinking victim of masculine passion. She had borne this man a child, she was scarred with life, a matron of nearly ten years standing.

"And I look every bit of it," she commented half aloud, as she stood before the mirror slipping off her corset cover.

"What'd you say?" he asked, turning his eyes toward her. He was seated on the bed stooping over, trying to undo a hard knotted shoe lace with his blunt finger nails.

"I said hurry up—I'm sleepy."

"You just bet I will," he answered eagerly.

Not long after this domestic readjustment Jim was smoking, his wife reading and his mother-in-law sewing in the dining room after supper when the doorbell rang from the vestibule below. Georgia pressed the opener and admitted Ed Miles, the boss of the ward, "the big fellow." She wasn't a bit glad to see him. She thought that to keep Jim away

Jim Reënlists

from politics and politicians was the only way to keep him away from drinking.

The big fellow made a formal call. He sat on the edge of his chair, his gray derby hat pushed under it, and constantly addressed Georgia as ma'am. Although she mistrusted him every moment of his visit, she felt the power of him, the brusque charm of his vitality, the humor of his laugh.

When he rose to go he said good-bye politely to the women and then to Jim, who could tell by the pressure of the big fellow's hand that he wanted a word alone with him.

"I'll see you to the door, Ed," said Jim, and they walked out together.

Georgia noticed thankfully that her husband did not take his hat and that he was wearing slippers.

"I want you to do me a little favor, Jim. You know we have our ward club election the first Monday of the new year.

"Yes."

"Come around."

"I ain't a member of the club any more."

"I'll fix that—and your back dues, too."

"I promised my wife to keep out of politics."

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"I don't blame her either. You were going some for a married man. But the fact is, they're trying under cover to take the organization away from us."

"I heard there was a little battle on."

"It's more than that. It goes deep. They've got backing. Now if my friends throw me down—"

"You know damn well I wouldn't throw you down, Ed."

"If you don't come to the front when I need you, it's the same thing. And I need you now. This is confidential, y'understand?"

"Sure."

"Because I wouldn't let it get out I was worried."

The two men were standing side by side on the front stoop in a stream of arc light from the street lamp.

"I want your vote," said Miles, "for old sake's sake."

"I dassen't go into politics regular, Ed."

"I don't ask you to."

"But I might slip up to the ward meeting one night, just doing my duty as a citizen."

"You're a good fellow, Jim." There was

Jim Reënlists

a trace of huskiness in the big fellow's bass voice and Jim felt himself again moved by his old loyalty to his leader. The two shook hands warmly, fervently, with the facile emotions of politicians.

"One thing about me—I never quit on my friends when they need me." There was a perceptible huskiness in Jim's voice also.

"I know it damn well," said the big fellow, throwing his arm about the other's shoulder, "because you're a thoroughbred." He thrust his hand into his side pocket and brought forth several dozen large glazed white cards bearing the legend, "For President Fortieth Ward Club, Carl Schroeder," with an oval half-tone of the fat-faced candidate.

"I don't know's I've got time to make any canvass, Ed," said Jim, slipping the cards back and forth through his fingers. "So you're running Carl, eh?"

The big fellow boomed a laugh. "You didn't know it—Reuben come to town. Sure we're running Carl, and he said only this morning if he could get you with him he'd walk in."

Rebellion

Jim was pleased. "Did Carl say that, honest?"

"Come on up to the corner and he'll tell you himself."

"I haven't got my hat."

"Take mine." The boss slipped his gray derby on Jim's head. It descended to his ears. "You're a regular pinhead," exclaimed the big fellow loudly, and they both laughed.

They walked up to the saloon, Connor's slippers flapping against the pavement flags with every step.

The saloon welcomed Jim as if he had been a conquering hero. It was light and warm and gay and full of men.

Carl Schroeder and Jim went into the private office and whispered importantly together for half an hour. When they came out, Carl was smiling and announced, clapping Jim on the back, "This old scout's brought be the best news in a week. What'll you have, boys?"

Jim took lithia, explaining he was wagoning, and they congratulated him and took whiskey themselves. He left reasonably early, half a dozen rounds of lithia having

Jim Reënlists

given him a rather sloppy-weather sensation within. Besides, the other fellows had got to feeling good and were talking to beat the band, and he just sat there like a bump on a log without a thing to say.

Not that the drinkers seemed particularly wise or witty, for some of them began to sound increasingly foolish as he listened to them, cold sober. But the liquor put them on a different plane from him, lower perhaps, but also wilder, freer, less deliberate and restrained. Their thoughts didn't follow the same sequence as his and he couldn't meet their minds as they seemed able to meet each others. He was self-conscious and glum and awkward, like a new millionaire in the hands of his first valet. And he knew that one drink of whiskey would alter all that and put him in right. But he didn't take it.

The big fellow saw him to the door, giving him a cap that he picked up in the private office to go home in.

"You'll do what you can for the organization in your precinct?"

"Sure,"

"And we won't forget you."

"Thanks, Ed, that's mighty fine of you."

Rebellion

They shook hands ; then Jim felt his fingers closing over a ten-dollar bill which had been pressed into his palm. It was easy money, he thought, as he paddled home in his cap and slippers. All he'd have to do to earn it would be to get around among the neighbors evenings for a couple or three weeks.

When Georgia, who had been waiting up for him with a peculiar fluttering of the heart each time that she heard a step on the stairs, found that he was entirely sober, she kissed him of her own accord.

EVE

Some six months later, on a hot, sticky afternoon in July, Georgia came away from a State Street department store carrying a paper-wrapped parcel under her arm. She had come down town to take advantage of an odds and ends sale of white goods advertised that morning.

In spite of the heat which beat down from a cloudless, windless sky and radiated up from the stone pavements where it had stored itself, she wore a long bluish-gray pongee coat. There were dark rings under her eyes and she felt ill and dispirited as she waited at Dearborn and Randolph for a North Clark Street car, which would drop her a block nearer her flat than the L would.

The car was slow in coming and a crowd of fifteen or twenty gathered to wait for it. Most of them were women homeward bound after the morning's shopping excitement. One of them also wore a long bluish-gray

Rebellion

coat and Georgia remembered having seen her at the white goods remnant counter. They caught each other's eyes and smiled faintly but did not speak.

When the car stopped there was the customary rush for seats and Georgia had to content herself with a strap. She balanced her bundle against her hip and shifted her weight uncomfortably from foot to foot swaying to the motion of the car, envying men.

A passenger who looked like an oldish maid, with gold-rimmed spectacles and tightly drawn thin hair, half rose and beckoned to Georgia.

"I'm getting out at the next corner," she said, and sliding across the knees of the person next to her, gave Georgia a seat next the window on the shady side.

"Thank you, thank you very much indeed," said Georgia gratefully. Several blocks later she turned and saw the maiden lady still standing on the back platform leaning against the controller-box and trying to write something on the back of a paper novel with a fountain pen. She had a sudden warm feeling for this unknown friend who had done her a small kindness with delicacy.

Eve

Then, for she was nervously unstable and the hues and tinges of her emotions followed each other very rapidly like magic lantern slides, she became suddenly and deeply humiliated. Was she already so noticeable that strange women, much older than she, would offer her their seats? From day to day she had gone on, still hoping that she was able to deceive the casual eye. Henceforth she felt that she could not by any stretch of will bring herself to go out of the house except at night.

The car made moving pictures for her as she looked through the heavy wire grill which kept people from putting their heads out of the windows, at the men slowly walking up and down the hot sidewalk in their shirt sleeves or stopping to talk under the projecting awnings of saloons and fruit stores, at the wrapped women sitting stupidly in the upper windows of run-down brick buildings devoted to light housekeeping, at children sucking hokey-pokey cones or playing ball in a side street.

The children seemed to her the only ones with joy. Perhaps that was because they didn't know what they were up against.

Rebellion

The motorman clanged his gong angrily twenty times, then had to slow down and stop behind a lumbering coal wagon while the driver, a much blackened and begrimed Irishman, climbed leisurely from his seat and fussed with the neck yokes of his team, swearing sulkily at the motorman the while. A messenger boy got back at him, in the opinion of the front platform, by hailing him as Jack Johnson, the hope of the dark race. The teamster responded with some dirty language. It was a bad, hot day for tempers.

Georgia had time during the delay to become interested in a little drama which was then being enacted directly across the street from her. Its impelling power seemed to be a dead white horse which lay on the soft sticky asphalt, surrounded by a fringe of men and boys who stared quietly at a little pool of blood that came from a round hole above the animal's eye.

The horse's mate stood stolidly in harness, hitched still to his wagon. She wondered if now he would have to pull it home alone. A man with a note book pushed through the crowd. He was evidently in authority of some sort. He asked a little boy something

Eve

and the boy turned and pointed toward an alley entrance cat-a-corner from where he stood.

Then a big man with a whip in his hand, a leather strap around his waist and a union button in his cap, probably the driver of the dead horse, threw his cap on the ground and stamped his foot, shook his fist at the boy and turned his back on the man with the note book and refused to answer his questions. She couldn't understand it at all. It seemed very unreasonable.

Then a street car bound the other way rolled up and came to a stop between her and the white horse. Mason Stevens sat on the seat precisely opposite hers, so near that they could have shaken hands if the two grilled iron screens had not been in the way. She noticed that his jaw fell open, like a dead person's.

She heard her conductor and the other conductor jerk simultaneously the go-ahead signals and the cars, quickly getting up speed, went in different directions. She did not turn her head, but she could feel the moment when he flipped onto the back platform. Then she

Rebellion

heard him come up the aisle, breathing heavily from his run.

The seat beside her had become vacant and she had placed her paper package of white goods on it. Now she took it into her lap and crossed her arms over it. He sat down.

"How do you do?" he said.

"How do you do?"

They both stared straight ahead, not daring at first to look at each other.

"It's—quite a while since we—saw each other," she ventured after a long pause.

"Yes, quite a while, but—" he stopped.

"But what?"

"I don't know."

Then Georgia, first to regain control of herself, laughed, breaking the tension.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Where have you come from and where are you going?"

"I got in from New York this morning and I'm going home—that is, to Kansas City, this evening. Had to see Cleever here."

"Is everything going well with you?"

"Yes, that is—yes."

"Business good?"

"Fine."

Eve

“Happy?”

“Oh, yes—are you?”

“Oh, yes,” she said, then added “very.”

They paused. “Don’t let me keep you if you have business,” she suggested.

“I haven’t,” he answered.

He thought that never in his life had he seen her look so ill, but doubted how to speak of it.

“You got all over your typhoid, of course,” was the way he put it.

“Oh, yes, completely.” She read him as usual, and saw what was in his mind, that her appearance had shocked him.

“Oh, don’t look at me that way, Mason,” she exclaimed suddenly; “I know I’ve gone off a lot, but don’t rub it in.”

“You’re nothing of the sort. You are a bit fagged out, that’s all.”

“Yes,” she said, “a bit fagged. Besides, I’m a staid, settled-down old thing—and you, perhaps you’re married by this time. Are you?”

“No.”

“Engaged, then?” She spoke casually, but there was a beating at her heart.

“Not even that.”

Rebellion

She pressed the button for the car to stop. She had a morbid hope that she might still keep her secret from him. But when he helped her off the car and they started to walk toward her home, she saw it in his eyes.

"You understand now?" she faltered.

"Yes."

They walked a hundred steps in silence. "Tell me one thing, Georgia," he said, "*you are happy?*"

"Yes," she answered firmly.

"That's all I care about."

When they reached her door he gave her the package of white goods which he had been carrying.

"Georgia," he said, as they shook hands good-bye, "remember this—if you ever need me, I'll come."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean if you ever need me I'll come—from anywhere."

She looked down at her ungainly figure in wonderment. "Surely you don't mean that now. I'm—I'm so ridiculous."

His voice choked. "God bless and keep you. God bless and keep you always, my dearest," he said, then went away.

Eve

She walked slowly and heavily up to the third flight, carrying her burden. When she opened the door with her latchkey she found her mother in blue gingham apron, cleaning Mr. Kane's room.

Mrs. Talbot paused in her operations. "Well," she vouchsafed, "Jim has turned up—just after you left. He's asleep in your room."

"Drunk?" asked Georgia.

"Of course," said Mrs. Talbot, emptying her carpet sweeper.

THE NAPHTHALINE RIVER

*And oh, of all tortures
That torture the worst,
The terrible, terrible torture of thirst
For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst.*

—Poe.

Jim was a dipsomaniac, not a villian. His vice made no one else so abysmally wretched as it made himself.

After each spree he descended into the deep hell of remorse. He thought of pistols, razors and the lake. Would not everyone he cared for be the better for his disappearance? Was it not decenter to die than to live on, a reeking beast, a stenchful sewer for whiskey?

Then as his long enduring body began once more patiently to expel the poison he had thrust into it, he slowly cheered up. He wouldn't kill himself, he would swear off forever and ever, so help him God, amen.

The Naphthaline River

In a few days he was completely reassured, and not a little proud of his evident self-control. He bragged of it casually. He was pharisaical. He pitied drinking men. "No," he would say, raising a deprecating hand when invited to smile with them, "I've cut it out for good. I don't like it, and," laughing, "it don't like me. I've had enough in my day to keep up my batting average for the rest of my life, and enough is sufficiency. A little ginger ale for mine, thank you."

And the best of it was that the whiskey didn't seem to tempt him any more. It was almost too easy, this being good. Nothing to it, if a fellow simply made up his mind.

Old Col. R. E. Morse had certainly stampered him the other morning when he was getting over his headache. He smiled a trifle wryly. Yes, he'd actually gone so far as to contemplate suicide, which was a great sin, to avoid getting full, which was a less one—and now here he was, never feeling better in his life and not touching a drop.

The old colonel certainly did make a goat of a fellow. He had acted more like a boy than a grown-up man. The blood curdling oaths he'd taken with eyes and hands raised

Rebellion

to heaven, by his mother's soul and his hope of meeting her again. The memory of his hysterical state somewhat embarrassed him.

Some drank and some didn't; just as some had blue eyes and some brown. Bismarck and Grant, for instance, drank. It was foolish on the face of it to suppose that those giants among men were in the habit of lying awake nights, agonizing over the question of a glass of beer or two with their evening meal. That wouldn't show they were strong, but weak.

At this point he dropped from his vocabulary the word "drunk," with its essentially ugly sound, and substituted "loaded," which is pleasanter, then "jagged," which is pleasanter still, especially if one humorously places the accent on the final *ed*. A further alteration in his barroom terminology made it stewed, soused, plastered, anointed, all lit up, sprung, ossified.

When a periodical gets around again to the point of calling intoxication by pet names his next spiffication is not very far ahead of him.

In gradually divesting itself of the hideous and demonic character which he was wont to ascribe to it in the first moments of his

The Naphthaline River

passionate remorse after a debauch, alcohol achieved the necessary preliminary work preparatory to his next one. The curious thing was that he always realized in the heat of a new resolution precisely how the next attack would presently begin against him.

"Never again," he would say to himself, "never again, Jim Connor, if you're worth the powder to blow you to hell. *Never again*, understand? Never mind about George Washington and Grover Cleveland. *You quit*. Don't you care if the doctors say it's a food. It isn't a food for you. *Leave it alone or die*. It's been your steady enemy since you got into long pants. Hate it."

But in spite of efforts that were sometimes gallant he could not keep his hate hot. The further he got from his last spree, the less horrible and more amusing it seemed in retrospection.

The furiously emotional character of his resolution gradually cooled off and lost its driving power.

Only near the end of a period of abstinence did alcohol make a direct assault upon his body, and even then in skillful disguise. His digestion went back on him. He would

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conscientiously seek to fend off his misery by pills, powders, salts, extracts, soda and charcoal tablets, pepsin gum, by giving up smoking, coffee, dessert, by hot water before meals and brisk walks; but he adopted these measures dispiritedly. A still small voice had begun to whisper that they wouldn't do and that only one thing would.

If that one thing were taken privately just before supper, say downtown where the crowd wasn't around to kid him for seeming backsliding and if it were immediately followed by half a teaspoonful of ground coffee from the receptacle made and provided for such contingencies, Georgia would be neither the worse nor the wiser and he would get his appetite back.

"Mind," said the small voice, "*just one.*" Why of course, he quickly agreed with himself, just one. That was all he needed. He didn't want the stuff for its own sake. He got no pleasure out of it. In fact he rather disliked the taste of it. But purely and simply for medicine, as a last resort. Hadn't he already tried every other damn thing on the market?

Usually he escaped detection the first day

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or two and went to bed at night triumphant and respectable, his secret locked successfully in his breast, excitedly convinced that at last he had learned to drink like a gentleman.

Presently he sensed the need of a more exact definition. How many drinks did a gentleman take a day? Two or three, or even more on special occasions? Was getting wet or cold a special occasion? What was a "drink" anyway—two fingers, three, or a whiskey-glassful? How much beer equaled how much spirits? Wasn't liquor mixed with seltzer less harmful to the lining of the stomach than the same amount taken straight? It ought to be, for a highball, according to test, averaged no more alcohol than the light wines of France and Italy, and as was well known, a drunken man was seldom seen over there. This being indisputable, might not one increase one's prescribed allowance of whiskey if one diluted it conscientiously?

He never tired of these and similar questions. They fascinated him and centered his consciousness. His mind revolved around the whiskey proposition like a satellite around its principal. He might hate, loathe,

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abominate whiskey, or pooh-pooh it, or compromise with it, or succumb to it. But he thought of it most of the time, endlessly readjusting his relations with it, like an old man in the power of a harlot.

Sometimes he would admit that there was much to be said against the cumulative effect of a drink every day. Twenty-four hours was hardly long enough to get wholly rid of the last one before you put the next one in on top of it. Would it not, possibly, be more advantageous to one's system, for instance, to get a slight skate on Saturday night, nothing serious, a mere jolly, harmless bun, and cut it out altogether for the rest of the week, than to go against it daily? This suggestion usually presented itself early on Saturday evening, after he had got a good start. After a little argument pro and con, the pros won.

The pros always won without exception, yet Jim never once neglected to go through the form of argument. It was astonishing with what perfect regularity he repeated time after time the same mental sequence in his circlings around whiskey.

He did not necessarily lose his job at each

The Naphthaline River

spree. He was not the explosive type of drunkard. He managed sometimes to drag himself wearily through the motions of work in the day time, slipping out every hour or two, on some excuse, to "baby it along." But from night to night his drunkenness would deepen until at last, with his nerves shattered and money gone, he stumbled home to his women folk to be nursed, to threaten suicide, while they telephoned lies to his employer, to take his solemn pledge, and to begin his cycle over again.

Four times during his wife's second pregnancy he made the complete circle.

She put up with his lapses more humbly than ever before in their married life. Each time that he renewed his pledge her sustaining hope returned that he would keep it this time, until at least the baby was born and she was well enough to return to work.

Then she wouldn't be afraid any more. Disencumbered, her strength restored, she would be wholly able to take care of herself and her child. She could earn two livings. She knew precisely how to go about it. There was nothing haphazard in her plans. Either she would promptly find another first

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class secretarial position or else she would go into business on her own hook, get a small room about eight feet by eight, at \$1.50 or \$1.75 a square foot, in a big office building and put on the door

G. CONNOR

STENOGRAPHER—COURT REPORTER

NOTARY PUBLIC

She could see it in her mind's eye. It looked fine. But it was several months off yet, slow months of discomfort, culminating in hours of the acutest agony a human being can suffer and live. She knew. She had been through it once already.

But she would never go through it again, after this time. Never. They might say what they liked about race suicide, this was the last for her.

In the meantime she must keep Jim as straight as possible and get all she could out of him. For presently there would be some heavy bills to pay. She kissed and flattered him, and went through his pockets at night, racing the bartenders for his money. Wasn't a business woman a big fool, she

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often asked herself, to get in this fix for a man she didn't love?

The Church—the Church took a pretty theoretical view of some things.

ALBERT TALBOT CONNOR

When her grandson was eight days old, Mrs. Talbot took him to be baptized. Georgia, not yet out of bed, protested against the precipitancy, but her mother was armored in shining faith and prevailed.

“You know your baby’s sickly,” she explained, “and not doing well. We cannot afford to take any chances—in case anything happened.”

So she dressed up the mite in his best white lace, and herself in her best black silk and sailed off to church in a closed carriage. He was named Albert Talbot.

Until he was brought back to her, Georgia felt savagely that there was something ridiculously primitive, something almost grotesque in the proceeding. To take her baby from her, she could hear him crying all down stairs, to a church a mile away, to be breathed on by a priest and touched with spittle and anointed with oil and wetted

Albert Talbot Connor

with water—how could such things make her perfect babe more perfect?

Why should this naïve physical rite send her son to Paradise if he died; and more especially why should the lack of it bar him out of Paradise forever? It was not fair to put such mighty conditions upon him. He was only a baby.

When young Albert was returned to her arms and her breast, she forgot her grievance. Anyway, he was on the safe side of baptism now. It couldn't do him any harm and it might do him an eternal and supreme good. It was better to take no chances with the supernatural.

She asked the doctor when she could wean him. "I am behind in my bills, you know," she explained, "especially yours, doctor. I'd better get to work."

"I can't conscientiously advise you to do anything of the sort," he answered.

"But why not? Most babies are put on a bottle nowadays."

"This one is a delicate little fellow—not five pounds at birth. You want him to get strong—mother's milk is the best medicine."

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"That settles it," she said slowly. "How long will it be? Six months?"

"Yes, six months anyway, perhaps more—perhaps a year. It depends on how he does. I won't disguise it from you—he's worried me once or twice."

A year! She didn't know a child was ever nursed a year. A year more of humbleness to Jim, of asking money from her brother, now called big Al, of fear that Mr. Kane might get annoyed and leave, of contriving and skimping and bill dodging. Another year of "womanly" womanhood, clinging to males for support.

The doctor saw her disappointment. "It's your sex' share of the world's work, you know," he said, "your duty to society."

"I have a baby and we're poor. If I'd had none, we'd be well off this moment," she said sharply. "If I really have done a duty to society why does society punish me for it?"

"I don't know," said the doctor.

He came rather frequently to the flat at this time, partly on the baby's account, partly on Mrs. Talbot's.

The river of life in the elder woman was

Albert Talbot Connor

becoming sluggish; rheumatism crippled her. The doctor veiled his explanation. "Synovial infusion," he called it, "but," he added reassuringly, "pericarditis is not in the least to be apprehended. I will stake my reputation on that." Which gave her new heart.

The rivulet of life in the child trickled uncertainly, obstinately refusing to increase. "Hmm," he muttered once, "microcephalic."

"What does that mean?" Georgia asked with quick suspicion.

"It means that he has a rather small head," smiled the doctor, "but then he is a rather small boy."

"Yes, he is tiny, isn't he?" said the mother pressing him to her soft, distended breast. "Little one—little one of mine." She looked at the doctor proudly. "He knows me," she said, "don't you think so?"

"Of course he does," he answered, and she knew that nothing else which had ever been or ever would be really mattered.

Whenever the doctor came to the flat he found time to tarry in the midst of his busy life of many patients and small fees for a chat with Georgia. He was a happy, crinkled, red faced, blue-gilled little man, who in-

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evitably suggested outdoors, though he wasn't there much, for he drove a closed electric runabout. He always meant some day to write a novel, a true novel, something on the order of "The Old Wives' Tale," showing people as they really were. He thought he had the necessary information. He had seen all sorts of folks come and go for thirty years. But he never seemed to get around to the actual writing. He was so pressed for time.

Georgia Connor, nicely disguised, would be a good character for his book. Change the color of her hair, for instance, put a couple of inches on her height, make her something else but a stenographer, say a cashier—and neither she nor anybody else would suspect. So he had many little talks with his model, getting material. Besides, he liked her. She was intelligent, she never bored him and she always had her own point of view, and half the time an unexpected one. She had been twice educated—first by the convent and next by the loop. One could never tell which side of her was going to speak next.

Eventually one side would prevail. Which

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it would be depended on the baby question. If she had enough of them tugging at her skirts she'd revert to type. He knew. He'd seen 'em come and go for thirty years. Persistent mothers don't aviate.

When little Al was a month old, shortly after midnight on the thirteenth of November—she will never forget the day—Georgia awoke suddenly as if a pistol had been shot off by her ear. The baby was wailing in a feeble little singsong. She looked at the clock. It wanted half an hour to his feeding time.

She walked slowly up and down the room, whispering to her son. Sometimes she stopped at the open window to look out into the cool pleasant night, but nothing she knew how to do made any difference. He kept steadily on with his heart-breaking little singsong wail.

At one precisely, before the single stroke of the small clock had stopped ringing through the room, she gave him breast. He took a little, then gasped and choked and "spit it up" again. She waited ten minutes as she had been instructed, then gave him a very little—not more than three or four

Rebellion

swallows. He rejected it. After twenty minutes she tried again. The warm, white life-giving fluid ran over his lips and chin, and trickled down his neck, wetting the neckband and sleeve of his thin woolen garment. But he kept a little down she thought. And then after awhile a little more. She did not wish him to be as far from her as his crib, so he dozed off in the crook of her elbow, while she took short naps a few minutes at a time until dawn.

At five she took in Mr. Kane's coffee. This duty now accrued to her, because the doctor had warned Mrs. Talbot not to overdo.

When Georgia returned with her empty tray she dropped into a chair for just a moment's rest. An hour later when she awoke she found little Al lying rigid on the bed, his small fists clenched, his eyes rolled up until only the whites could be seen through his half-closed lids, his under lip sucked in between his gums. She was not sure that he breathed.

Hastily she ran to the bathroom and turned the hot water tap on full. Hastily she ran back, and took the child in her arms. She knocked at the door of big Al's room.

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"Al," she cried, "Al, Al, Al—wake up."

"What—eh, oh, what?" came a sleepy voice.

"Telephone the doctor, quick, quick, quick, the baby is—Oh, hurry, Al."

She ran to the bathroom and put her hand in the running stream from the faucet. Tepid, only tepid. Would it never get warm? If God ever wanted anything more from her—in the way of belief or devotion—let Him make this water hot, now, on the instant.

Her wet hand and her dry one moved rapidly together at her baby's clothes, unpinning the safety pins. Even in her haste she put them in her mouth mechanically, one after another. Once more she plunged her hand into the water. Warmer now, yes, almost warm enough. She put the round rubber stopper in the escape.

She lowered the stiff and naked little child into the tub, one hand behind his neck, the other held to shelter his face from the spray of the hot water which was pouring from the open tap.

Al stood at the door in bare feet, his trousers slipped on over his nightshirt.

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"D'you want the doctor to come right away?" he asked.

"Do you mean to say you haven't gone yet?" she said piteously without turning her head as she knelt by the bathtub, "of course, right away—now, this instant."

The young fellow departed on the run for the janitor's telephone in the basement.

The water had become quite hot, but still the child did not relax. Georgia tried to undo one tiny fist with her forefinger, but she felt with agony of heart that it would not unclench easily. She sensed a touch on her shoulder, then saw another older hand put in the water behind the child's head.

"No, mother, you shan't," she said, "it is my baby, leave him to me."

"Shall I ask Father Hervey to come?" said Mrs. Talbot.

Georgia was too intent to answer.

Mrs. Talbot walked slowly down stairs, stiff with rheumatism. She met Al coming up, four steps at a time.

"How is he?" he shouted as he passed. She turned to explain, but he vanished out of sight around the turn at the landing, not waiting for an answer.

Albert Talbot Connor

When she got Father Hervey on the telephone he asked if she was speaking of the young child he had baptized a month or so back.

"Three weeks come Tuesday," she said.

"Ah, then he has been baptized. That, at least, is well."

"But Father, if you could come, and pray, maybe it would save his life here, too."

He hesitated but a moment. Truly there was no priestly obligation to visit sick infants who had already been baptized, whenever their grandparents became excited. To baptize dying babies or to administer the last rites to those who had reached the age of reason was his duty. This was not. But if he did it, it would be an act of human kindness.

"I will come," he said over the wire, "at once."

THE DOCTOR TALKS

When the doctor arrived the convulsion had passed. Little Al was lying in his crib, asleep, breathing easily, the snarls in his nerves unravelled. Georgia explained what had happened.

"You did just the right thing," said the physician.

"Doctor," she asked slowly, "will he ever be well?"

"What do you mean by well?"

"I mean, when he grows up will he be as strong—and—and bright as other men?"

"That is impossible to answer, Mrs. Connor, without the gift of prophecy."

"Don't put me off," said she, staring at him, "tell me the truth. I have a right to know."

"I should first have to have a little more definite knowledge of his antecedents, his family history. Is there anything which might explain—"

The Doctor Talks

"Not on our side of the family," Mrs. Talbot interrupted quickly, "they're clean people, every one."

"His father," said Georgia, "is a drunkard and the son of a drunkard."

"In that case it is possible, mind you I only say possible, that he has inherited a—a nervous tendency."

"Inherited, ah, I knew. There was something in me that warned me steadily not to go back to him. Something that made me shudder to think of it. But at last I gave in, because everyone in the world seemed in a conspiracy to make me."

"Yes," the doctor answered drily, "we run into such histories frequently."

"But," she pleaded suppliantly, as if he had the power to do or undo, "surely my baby can grow out of this—nervous tendency. Tell me he can grow out of it. With the right care and training, surely he can grow out of it."

He placed his hand on her shoulder, and honesty seemed to her to be patent and apparent in his voice. "Yes," he said, "it is possible, it is probable. I have seen many a mother make her child over with love."

Rebellion

"Ah, that's all I want," she gave a happy little sigh, "for I can do what they have done."

There was a tap at the door. Mrs. Talbot opened it and Father Hervey came in. "Oh," she said, "Father, the baby's well again. I shouldn't have bothered you."

"I'm glad for once it's an occasion for rejoicing," he said quietly. "Good morning, doctor."

"Good morning, Father. Was the poor fellow long after I left?"

"About half an hour."

"Were you at a deathbed last night, you two?" asked Georgia.

"Yes, Georgia, we were," said the priest.

"It seems somehow strange," she pondered, "that you two, so different, should be called together at the end."

"Oh, it happens often enough," explained the doctor. "Poor people. They want to keep them here a little longer, and the priest to bid them Godspeed in case they've got to go."

"It must be terrible," reflected Mrs. Talbot, "to die without a priest."

"Yes," answered the doctor, "Catholics

The Doctor Talks

have the best of us there. They always go hopefully, and they're the only ones that do. I've sometimes wished that I could accept the faith, but—" he shook his head slowly.

"Why can't you?" said Georgia quickly. Father Hervey smiled. He and the doctor were trusted friends. There was no poaching on each other's preserves.

"Do you honestly believe in a future life?" she asked again, staring at the man of science with her peculiar little wide-eyed stare.

"Yes, I believe all of us here will probably have it—except perhaps Father Hervey."

"Well, doctor," said Mrs. Talbot most indignantly, "I must say you've no call to be disrespectful. If any of us is certain to have it, it's him."

"Oh, that's one of his little jokes," he said, "he means the rest of you'll likely leave children behind you to be carrying your living eyes and nose and mouth about the earth long after the headstones are atop of you—and that's denied me."

"If they'd been denied me," its chronic undertone of humor momentarily leaving the doctor's voice, "or were taken now—I'd just as soon quit. I've four; one's learning to

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crawl, one to walk, one to read and the oldest," he made a vain effort to conceal his pride in such a son, "Oh—he's a boy. He can work his mother as easy as grease with a sore throat story whenever he wants to stay out of school. Pretty clever, eh, with a doctor right in the family? He'll be a great bunco steerer—or a great lawyer—some day and make his name—he's a junior—bristle in the headlines of 1950. That's the real life after death—our blood lives on, we don't."

"Yes," said Georgia tenderly glancing at the crib, "our blood lives on, it lives on."

"When a little shop girl takes the boat over to St. Joe," said the medical man, folding his arms, well started on his favorite eugenics, "she may be preparing a blend that will endure as long as the race—ten thousand or one hundred thousand years, while any of the descendants are alive. Marriage—true marriage, where children grow up and beget others—outlasts death by centuries, perhaps eons." He paused to let it sink in. "Whatever else there may be in addition," he said, bowing slightly in the direction of the priest, "this much is certain true—in our children we find immortality."

The Doctor Talks

“Yes,” said Georgia softly, looking at the crib where lay her child, “in our children there is immortality. My sweet little lamb,” she whispered, going to her child, “my sweet—” her voice changed suddenly, growing very harsh. “Doctor,” she said, “come here.”

The doctor placed his ear to the child’s heart, then took his stethoscope from his satchel to listen for the least fluttering. He heard none. As he straightened up again, she saw his answer in his face.

“Is—he—dead?” she asked.

“Yes.” He spoke to the priest. “I will come this afternoon, in case I can be of any use,” he whispered, and quietly withdrew.

The priest sprinkled the small dead body with holy water. Mrs. Talbot and Al fell on their knees, but Georgia stood. She was unable to kneel to a God who had done that. The priest prayed, half murmuring. Then in a louder voice he said, “As for me, Thou hast received me because of mine innocence.”

“And hast set me before Thy face forever,” muttered Mrs. Talbot, who knew the response. Al was silent. for he was not sure

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of the words. Georgia stood dumb, watching her child with her wide-eyed little stare.

"The Lord be with thee—" came the deep musical voice of the priest.

"And with thy spirit," muttered Mrs. Talbot.

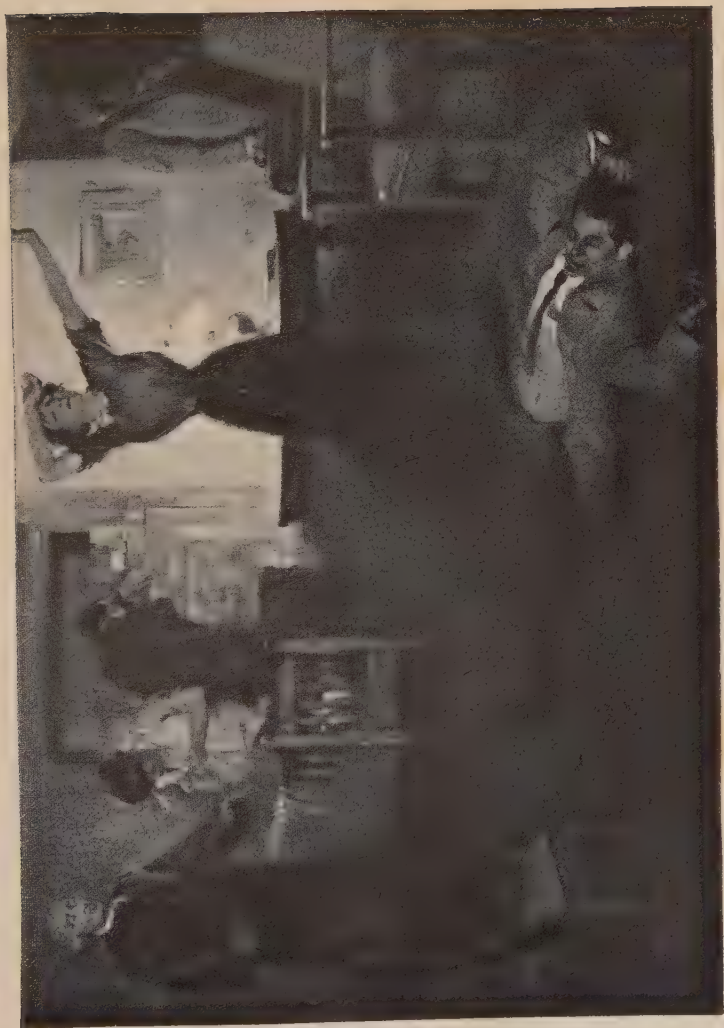
There was a moment of silence, then came a knock at the door. It was repeated twice, imperatively.

Then the door was opened from outside and Carl Schroeder, president of the Fortieth Ward Club, entered, half carrying and half guiding Jim Connor, who was stupidly drunk.

Schroeder placed Jim in a chair and quickly slunk out. Jim swayed an instant in the chair, trying to hold his balance, then fell forward out of it. His hand struck the crib as he lay inert, unknowing, obscene.

Georgia looked at him for an instant, she began to giggle, to laugh. Her laughter grew louder and louder. It came in waves, each wilder and higher than the last.

It was long before they could quiet her.



Georgia Laughed.

FRANKLAND & CONNOR

Georgia and Jim Connor parted at the cemetery gate after the burial of their son. They have not, since then, seen each other.

Exclusive of her debt to Stevens, Georgia owed more than two hundred dollars, nearly half of which was for the funeral. Mrs. Talbot had ordered eight carriages.

Big Al behaved very well, turning in everything beyond carfare and lunch money for several weeks. Then he relaxed to the extent of five bright neckties and a pair of pointed patent leathers. But on the whole he was a very good boy, and Georgia told him so.

Her own wardrobe was in no condition for effective job-hunting. "Old faithful," the tan suit, once the pride of her heart and the queen of her closet, had dated beyond hope. Time had robbed the tan, not so much of substance as of essence, of smartness and caste.

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The models of Paris hadn't worn a six yard pleated skirt for three years. So Georgia couldn't either, without proclaiming to her kind that she was either green or broke.

As for the blue serge, that was out of the question too, because it was simply worn out. She bought a black broadcloth coat and skirt that fitted wonderfully, as if they had been made for her, and a half dozen ruffled shirt waists. To these she added a severe black toque and low laced shoes. The total outlay ran to eighty-five dollars, but she considered it essentially a business investment, as no doubt it was.

She was pale, and her face had grown thin, which made her big eyes seem bigger. Her heavy black hair worn low on her forehead accentuated her pallor. She was what is frequently termed "interesting looking." At all events many people on the street were interested enough to turn and look again.

She clung to the idea of an office of her own some day, but because of the impracticability of starting business with a capital of five hundred dollars less than nothing, concluded to begin as assistant to some already estab-

Frankland & Connor

lished stenographer. Thus, she could learn the game, make acquaintances, get a following. Then when it was time to take the plunge, it would be simple enough to circularize this trade and switch at least part of it over to herself from her former employer.

She went up and down in many elevators and through many ground-glass doors in her hunt for work. One prosperous-looking, buxom, extreme blonde of thirty-eight, dressed a coquettish twenty-five, paid her a compliment.

"Listen," she said in a stage whisper, motioning to Georgia with a stubby forefinger to bend her head nearer, "listen. I wouldn't hire you for a dollar a week." She laughed merrily. "You're too much of a doll-baby yourself."

Georgia noted that the blonde lady's two assistants, hammering away in the dark inside corners of the room, were without menace, sallow and flat-chested.

In a small suite in the newest, highest-rented building in town, she found three tall, thin young men, apparently brothers. They were all very busy, writing by touch, their eyes fixed steadily on their notes. She spoke

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to the nearest, but his flying fingers did not even pause for her. "No women," he replied succinctly.

Many of the public stenographers had no employes; few more than one. Georgia found several places where they had just hired a girl. Apparently it was nowhere near so easy to find a place where they had just fired one. It was getting discouraging.

But her luck turned at the sign of L. Frankland, room 1241, the Sixth National Building. 1241 had a single narrow window which gave upon eight hundred others in the tall rectangular court. The room was not strategically desirable because there was another stenographic office between it and the elevator bank. Georgia felt sure she had seen L. Frankland before, but couldn't just place her.

"Do you need help? I am an expert stenographer." That was her formula.

"Yes, I do," came the wholly surprising answer. Georgia promptly sat down.

"But," continued L. Frankland, "I cannot afford to pay for it."

Georgia rose. "In that case," she said stiffly, "good-day."

Frankland & Connor

“Why not,” suggested L. Frankland, “go in with me as partner?”

“Partner—that would be fine—but I haven’t any money.”

“Neither have I—and I’ll be turned out of here a week from to-morrow if I haven’t twenty-seven fifty by then. That’s how much I’m behind.” She smiled cheerfully. Then Georgia remembered her. She was the nice old maid who had given her the seat in the car on the day she had met Mason.

“What’s your rent?”

“Twenty-seven fifty.”

“What arrangements do you want to make?”

“Fifty-fifty on everything.”

“I’ll take a chance,” said Georgia, removing her hat. “But,” she exclaimed, looking around, “why you’ve only got one machine—and a double keyboard at that. I’m not used to them.”

“We can rent another for a dollar a week—any sort you want,” L. Frankland suggested with ready resource.

“We can’t get it here to-day. Let’s see, Miss, Miss ah—what is your name?” They

Rebellion

told each other. "Miss Frankland, are you a fast writer?"

"No," she answered, composedly rattling off a few test lines — "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party." It was true enough. She was slow.

"How much work do you get?"

"Four ten-cent letters and a short brief this morning. That's all to-day."

"What's the idea now — wait?" asked Georgia, taking off her coat and leaning against the solitary desk.

"Yep — like young lawyers."

"No use our both waiting with one machine between us. I tell you what — you go over to the Standard Company, on Wabash Avenue, and order a number four sent here, then traipse around to some other public offices — you can find plenty in the back of the telephone book — and see if they won't sublet us some of their work at half rates. I'll hold down the place, and get the hang of this keyboard while you're gone."

L. Frankland saluted. "Aye, aye, ma'am," said she. "I likewise do now promote you to be captain of this brig."

Frankland & Connor

When she returned she brought a sheaf, the manuscript of a drama.

Georgia knocked it out in twenty-four hours, in triplicate, and took it back to the firm of origin in the Opera House Block. "Z. & Z.—Theatrical Typists" was the sign on the door.

The room was small, and thick with smoke. There must have been a dozen men in it, all important-looking. Mr. Zingmeister, the senior partner, a fat young Hebrew, received Georgia's work.

"Rotten," he said, glancing through it.

"Why?" she asked sharply.

"Wrong spacing. A script plays a minute to the page if typed right. How could anyone tell how long this would play?" He held it up between two fingers, contemptuously.

"Give me a sample act for a guide and I'll do it over for nothing."

He hesitated. "Too many novices in this profession already," he grumbled.

"My time's up," said she, reaching for her work. "If you don't want to pay me for it, I'll take it back."

He laid his hand on it.

"Come, come," said she, impatiently.

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"Oh, keep your shirt on while I think it over," he answered. "All right, do it over again and do it right," he sighed plaintively, "and space it this way. Speeches solid. Drop two for character's name. Capitalize them—caps, understand?—with red underlines. Also red underline the business, so."

He demonstrated with a spoiled page from the waste basket.

"That'll give you the code, understand," he concluded, shoving it in her hand. "Now shake a foot."

The important-looking beings in the room apparently neither saw nor heard. Save for the clouds of smoke that issued from them they might have been graven.

When she got back to 1241 she was bursting with an idea.

"How long does your lease run, Miss Frankland?" she asked.

"Until May first."

"You can't get out of it?"

"No, I signed up."

"Well, if we don't pay our rent they'll put us out." It proved to be a prophecy.

Frankland & Connor found a bigger room for sixteen a month in the theatrical district,

Frankland & Connor

which for some unexplained reason converges from three sides upon the Court House. They described themselves as "experts in theatrical work," and presently they were.

They learned to give a dramatic criticism with each receipted bill. The play they had just transcribed was deeply moving, especially in the big scene, or one long roar, sure-fire. Playwrights were as thick as July blackberries and the firm prospered.

Occasionally Georgia sat up most of the night with a scared author and an impatient stage director, altering the script of a play after it had flivvered on the opening, and getting out new parts for it.

At first, she and L. Frankland found themselves forced into overtime almost every evening, because the theatrical people were invariably in such a raging hurry to get their work done, vast enterprises apparently hanging upon the rapid, if not the immediate, completion thereof. With growing experience, however, the firm learned to promise impossibilities for the sake of peace, but not to attempt them.

When the orders came in faster than they could handle them, Frankland & Connor

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jobbed them out again at fifty per cent. Georgia had three or four private stenographers on her list who were glad to pick up a little pin money on their employers' machines after hours. Perhaps in hours, too. She didn't know or care.

At the end of a twelvemonth she had paid off her debts, except the one to Mason, on which she sent interest.

She was also able to employ a woman to help her mother with the housework two afternoons a week.

Early in the firm's second year of existence, L. Frankland came in one Monday morning with a long face, a rare thing for her.

"I want to make a change," she said, "I'm not satisfied. I've been thinking it over. This isn't an impulse."

"A change?"

"Yes."

Georgia was genuinely distressed, because she had grown very fond of Miss Frankland. There was no more cheerful person in the world, she thought, than this dry, twinkling old maid. And she had hoped her feeling was returned. Real friendships were too rare to be tossed away so suddenly.

Frankland & Connor

“I’m not satisfied,” repeated L. Frankland, “because the present deal between us isn’t fair. You’ve pulled the big half of the load ever since we started—so, give me a third interest instead of a half—I’d be better pleased, honest Injun, hope to die.”

“Oh, shut up, Frank, and get to work. I’ve no time for foolishness,” responded Georgia, much relieved. “Fifty-fifty it started and fifty-fifty it sticks.”

Which it did.

THE STODGY MAN

Mrs. Talbot was beginning to break. Her bones ached barometrically before rain; she noticed that after she had been on her feet a great deal, on cleaning days for instance, her ankles began to puff. Also she learned to avoid short breath by taking the stairs more easily. Sometimes she grew dizzy and little black specks floated before her eyes.

Fortunately she regarded her symptoms as a series of disconnected, unrelated phenomena. The heart was one thing, the liver another, rheumatism a third. Swollen joints were still different. That came from overdoing. For different diseases different remedies. She took her medicine very conscientiously, treating her symptoms, not her annodomini.

She thought of her children as young, not of herself as old. She wasn't sixty yet, just the time when people learn at last to profit by experience—the same age as most of the

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people she knew, Mrs. Conway, for instance, and Mrs. Schweppe, Mrs. Keough and Mrs. Cochrane.

The last two had recently been the victims of a sad and striking coincidence. They had lost their husbands within twenty-four hours of each other, in the preceding February, on the seventh and eighth of the month as Mrs. Talbot recalled it, anyway it was of a Tuesday and Wednesday. Dan Keough, to be sure, had been ailing some time, but it would have been a day's journey to find a heartier looking man than Jerry Cochrane, up to the very day he came home coughing. And a week after, they laid him out.

They say a green Christmas makes a fat churchyard, and goodness knows last winter proved it. It had been very wet and sloppy, hardly any snow at all until January, and then it didn't last long. She had followed the hearse to Calvary one, two, three, four times in a twelvemonth. The climate had lately changed for the worse. She could remember when all the Christmases were white and didn't use to kill people.

The first time that Georgia suggested giving up housekeeping, mama vehemently re-

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pudiated the idea. The third time she agreed to it, but on one sole condition, namely, that the change was to be only temporary. They were to take another flat as soon as she got to feeling more like herself again.

The family moved to the parlor floor of a long and narrow gray block house farther north. What had been designed, in 1880, for the front parlor was now the living room of the suite. Georgia put a piano in it, and Al a rack of bulldog pipes and a row of steins, like college men. The back parlor became Mrs. Talbot's room, the dining room Georgia's, and Al took the small one in the rear, overlooking the back yard.

The meals were served, 7 to 8:30, 1 to 2, 6 to 7, in the half-basement immediately under the front parlor. They were standardized—corned beef Thursday, fish Friday, roast beef Saturday, chicken Sunday. Mrs. Talbot and her children had their own private table, and they gave her the best seat with her back to the window, as titular head of the family. They had an arrangement that the young folks were never to be away from supper at the same time and leave mama alone.

Georgia saw no reason why she should not

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now and then accept an invitation from some man or other to dine and go to the theatre, provided she had sized him up for a decent sort. She always made the condition, though, that she would provide the theatre seats, which she usually managed to do inexpensively, owing to her acquaintance with advance men and agents in a rush to get their Sunday flimsies written.

At intervals she received an avowal which flattered her sufficiently, if made well. And she had plenty of hints that she might evoke a declaration without any serious difficulty.

But she had very little trouble in keeping men where she wanted them, for she had the faculty of knowing what they were going to think before they thought it.

A young, pink-cheeked, country lawyer lately moved in from Iowa, and famous there as a stump orator, gave her the biggest surprise. She liked him; she appreciated he had real brains. But on the very first evening that they ever went anywhere together, when he was driving her home from the play, he became suddenly and violently obsessed with the idea that a taxicab was liberty hall. After a few seconds' struggle, she rapped on

Rebellion

the window, made the chauffeur stop, and went home in the car after a few pat words to her host.

There came from him next morning by special messenger sixteen closely and cleverly written pages, which started with a graceful and humble expression of contrition and ended with an offer of marriage.

The messenger was to wait an answer. He didn't have to wait long. She at once accepted the apology and rejected the proposal.

She admitted frankly that as a rule she liked men much better than women (except, of course, L. Frankland). They had a bigger outlook. But she didn't want and wouldn't have even the mildest sort of a flirtation.

She thought it would be cheap and cowardly and absurd, after murdering real love as she had done, to philander across its grave.

When at last she was able to pay back Mason's loan in full, with accumulated interest, she was surprised to find how little happier it made her. For nearly three years she had lived with her debt on the assumption that it was life's most insupportable burden. Now that it was settled, she began to realize

The Stodgy Man

that she had entertained the angel of success in disguise. The debt had been her most dynamic inspiration.

The man she loved had borrowed to lend to her. Quite possibly in so doing he had saved her life. In return she had broken her promise to marry him. Immediately he had begun to prosper and she to fall on evil days. Pride could not be more humiliated. To save her face before him, it was absolutely indispensable for her to prosper also in her turn, by her own will and skill; to pay him off to the last accumulated mill of interest; to prove to him that she had done as well without him as he had done without her; to make him know that she was very, very happy and content.

When her hopes came true and she enlarged her quarters and took a third assistant and opened a checking account, and alternated Saturdays off with L. Frankland; when her hopes came true they weren't hopes any more, but history. For anyone with the gambler's instinct, and Georgia had more than a little of it, yesterday is a dull affair compared with to-morrow.

It gives one a mighty respectable feeling

Rebellion

to have the receiving teller smile and say, "What—you—again?" when you come to his window. Then he writes a new total in your book in purple ink and you peek at it once or twice on your way back to the office.

Yes, success was very sweet and creditable. It did away with a heap of worry around the first of the month; any woman is happier for not having to make last year's suit do; and people are certainly more polite. Money's the oil of life. But it isn't life.

If you're only thirty, and the dollar's all you want, or get—Georgia leaned back in her pivot chair and stretched her arms above her head and yawned, ho-ho-hum, the stodgy man will get you if you don't watch out.

"Frank," she asked, "do you ever feel like an automaton that's been wound up and has to keep going till it runs down?"

"Sure. Everybody does, now and then."

"But what's the use? what's the answer?" continued Georgia querulously.

L. Frankland looked over her spectacles and her shoulder, her hands still on the keyboard. "The answer," she said vivaciously, "for a woman is a man; for a man the answer is a woman. Whoever made us knew what

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he was about, and don't you forget it. What's your idea?"

"Let's hear yours out first."

"Once when I was a young thing," said L. Frankland, swinging around, "I waited for an hour in my wedding dress, but—he never came. He was killed on the way to the church by a runaway horse. I decided to remain true to his memory. I had other chances afterwards, when I was still a young thing," she smiled whimsically, "but I refused them. I'm sorry now."

"Frank, you remember my telling you about that money I owed to the man I—spoke about?"

"Yes."

"And how it worried me?"

"Yes."

"Well, I paid it off last week, and I've been miserable ever since."

"That's because you felt you were snapping the last thread. Is he still in love with you?"

"No. At least I don't see how he could be. It's been so long, and the last time he saw me," Georgia laughed unhappily, "I wasn't very lovely."

Rebellion

"If he saw you now, young lady, he'd have nothing to complain of," was the cheerful retort. "By the way, has he sent you a receipt for the money?"

"No, not yet."

"The best sign in the world," said L. Frankland, slapping her knee excitedly.

"Why?"

"Because it shows he's thinking about it. It's not routine to him. Georgia, if you have another chance given you, don't be afraid to take life in your own hands," the old maid said gently, "if you know that you love him."

"I have always known that, since the beginning," the young woman answered slowly, "but even if by a miracle he still—does, it is too late now. I've taken three of the best years of my life away from him and wasted them, thrown them away. You know how it is with us women. We have only twenty years or so when men really want us. More than half of mine are gone. It wouldn't be fair to go to him now. He should marry a young girl. He is a young man."

"You've wasted a lot of time already, and to make up for it you'll waste the rest."

The Stodgy Man

That's supreme logic. And yet," with heavy sarcasm, "man says we can't reason."

Georgia smiled at her friend's earnestness. "Oh, I'm in the rut, Frank. What's the use of talking any more about me? Come on to lunch. The girls," she nodded in the direction of the three employes in the outer office, "can hold the fort for an hour. There isn't much doing."

When their meal was finished they matched for the check, and L. Frankland was stuck. "Do one thing anyway," she said as she swept up her change, minus a quarter, "get your divorce. Then you can marry him straight off, if he asks you again—and you change your mind. You wouldn't like to go through all that rigmarole under his eyes, while he was standing by, waiting."

"No—I guess I won't bother. What's the use? I won't change my mind. Here I be and here I stay."

"You're a big fool," responded L. Frankland. "That's what I think."

REBELLION

Georgia walked home to the boarding house that evening, as was her custom when the weather was fair. It was quite a tramp, three miles, but then the fresh air and exercise made one feel so well. Besides, if one wants to be sure of staying slim—

Mrs. Plew, the landlady, was standing on the front stoop when she arrived, talking of carving knives to an old-fashioned scissor-grinding man, the sort who advertise with a bell and a chant.

“Good evening, Mrs. Connor.”

“Good evening, Mrs. Plew.”

“Lovely weather we’re having.”

“Yes indeed, isn’t it? My partner—she lives in Woodlawn—saw two robins this morning. The buds ought to be out pretty soon now.”

Mrs. Plew laughed. “The German bands are out already. That’s the surest sign I know. Oh, Mrs. Connor,” Georgia, who was

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on the top step turned, "there was a young man came to see you this afternoon. He waited nearly an hour. He didn't leave his name."

"Did he say anything about coming back?"

"No."

"And he didn't leave his name?"

"No."

"What did he look like?"

"Well, he was tall, blue clothes, black derby hat. He had on a blue tie with white dots. I don't know as I can describe him exactly. It was kind of dark in the hall and I didn't get a good look at him."

Georgia paused with her hand on the knob of the living room door, as she heard talking within, her mother's uninflected murmuring and a musical masculine voice, deeper than Al's. It must be Father Hervey, patient man, who came regularly once a fortnight, nominally to confer with Mrs. Talbot as to the activities of the ladies' advisory board of the children's summer-camp school. But his visits were less for the summer school than for mama, to cheer her in her feeble loneliness.

Georgia slipped back to her own room, by

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way of the hall. An instinct has been growing in her of recent months to avoid falling into talk with the priest. He was so sure and strong and dominating; and she wanted to think for herself.

Al was whistling loudly in his back little cubicle, performing sartorial miracles before his square pine-framed mirror, with a tall collar that lapped in front and a very Princeton tie, orange and black, broad stripes.

She smiled reminiscently, regretfully, as she stood in the shadow and watched his gay evolutions through the partly opened door. He had so very much ahead of him that was behind her. He had the spring.

“Why such splendor?” she asked finally.

“Oh, I didn’t know you were there. Why,” he explained, amazed that explanation was necessary, “to-night is the big night. Our Bachelor’s Dance. Don’t you remember you were invited—as chaperone. I’m on the committee.”

“Hope you have a good time. Who are you taking?”

He colored defiantly. “Annie Traeger.”

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"Oh-ho, I thought it was Delia Williamson that you—"

"It was, but she got too gay, so I thought I'd teach her a lesson."

"Poor Delia," sighed Georgia, mischievously.

"Oh, I'll have a dance or two with her," Al promised, putting on his coat and giving his hair a last pat with the tips of his fingers. He departed with the trill of a mocking bird. He had been a famous whistler from childhood.

Georgia tiptoed to the door of the living room. There was no sound. Father Hervey must have gone. She turned the knob and went in.

"Good evening, my child," said the priest, rising courteously and extending his hand. "I was resting a moment, hoping you might be home."

"Good evening, Father. Thank you so much."

"Your mother," he lowered his voice, "isn't as strong as her friends might hope, I'm afraid. She just had a faint spell, and she's in there now, lying down. It quite worried me, Georgia."

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"Yes, sometimes I'm afraid she won't get better."

"She has told me she wished to resign from the advisory board of our summer school. That shows how she thinks she is. You know how much interest she always took in the work as long as she was able."

"Yes—poor mama."

"It would be a great comfort to her if you would take her place."

"Me?" exclaimed Georgia, startled.

"Yes. She is very anxious to keep it in the family, as it were," he explained, smiling.

"Let's see," asked Georgia slowly, "who's on that board?"

"Mrs. Conway."

"Mrs. Conway," she repeated, picking up a newspaper and writing on the margin.

"Mrs. Keough, Mrs. Schweppe, Mrs. Cochrane."

Georgia wrote on the newspaper after each name. "And mama," she added. She footed the total. "Those five women aggregate more than two hundred and fifty years," she bitterly exclaimed. "They're an advisory board, because they can only advise about life. They're past living it. And I—

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am just thirty. No, Father, I won't go on the board—yet."

She was curiously resentful, as if she had received an insult. She walked quickly to the window and threw it open, looking out and turning her back to the priest until she might collect herself and control her strange agitation.

"Very well," he answered gently, "I only hoped that it might please your mother." He took his hat in his hand and stood up. "Before I go," he said, "I think I should tell you that I have had news from your husband." He took a letter from his pocket and held it out toward her.

"No—I won't read it, thank you."

"He's on a farm in Iowa," the priest said, "I managed it. He's been doing hard work—and is much better."

"Yes, he may raise himself up a little, and then just when people are beginning to hope for the hundredth time, he'll relapse and—wallow."

"Yes, I am afraid sometimes he is hopeless." The despondency was plain in his voice.

"He's quite hopeless. He's incurable.

Rebellion

It's a disease; but it works slowly on him, like leprosy."

"Do you think a drunkard is wholly to blame—for his malady?"

"Oh," said Georgia, "I'm not sure that anyone's ever to blame for anything. It just happens, that's all."

Mrs. Plew knocked and half opened the door. "That young man's back," she said, "shall I show him in?" Before Georgia could answer Stevens came into the room.

Without greeting of any kind, in rapid, mechanical words, as if he had learned his piece by heart, he explained his abrupt coming.

"I have received a business offer," he began, "which if I accept will take me away from America for a term of years. It is to superintend, on behalf of Mr. Silverman, the reorganization of certain life companies along modern American lines in South America. Headquarters, Rio de Janiero, Brazil. I have come for your advice, and your advice will govern. Shall I or shall I not accept the offer?" He stopped abruptly, looking at her with a harsh, almost savage expression, as he waited for her reply.

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“You know what I mean,” he burst out.
“Answer me yes or no.”

“You know Father Hervey, Mr. Stevens,” she said coolly.

“I think I have heard of you before, Mr. Stevens,” the priest bowed slightly.

“And I have heard of you,” answered the young man bitterly. He turned to Georgia.
“Answer me,” he repeated, “yes or no.”

“If it is an advantageous offer from a business point of view,” she said gently, “I think you should go, Mason.”

“That settles it,” said he between his teeth. “You’d made it plain enough with your silence. I said I’d come when you sent for me. I waited and waited, but you never sent. Every single day I’ve looked in the mail hoping, and the only thing I got from you was—money. And when I found that Connor had left you, had been gone a year, I had a little hope again that—Oh, Georgia,” he exclaimed in his wretchedness, “you did care for me once. Why did you stop?”

“I haven’t stopped, Mason, but—” she motioned toward the priest in his black and solemn garments, standing beside them like

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a stern guardian, "but—" she said, and her shoulders seemed to droop forward irresolutely, "I'm helpless."

Stevens took a step toward Father Hervey and there was almost a threat in his gesture. "Don't you see," he said, his two fists clenched, "that if someone in the barroom had cracked Jim Connor over the head with a whiskey bottle during his last spree or if D Ts had hit him five per cent harder afterwards—I could have her with your blessing—and we'd be happy—oh, so happy as we'd be, Georgia! It isn't as if I wanted to break up a home. The home's broken up already. Don't you see? And you're telling her she can't move out of the wreck. She's got to sit in the rubbish as long as the man who made it is able to make more."

"Young man," the priest answered not unkindly, "will you listen for a moment to an old man? I believe that you are a decent sort—that your love for Georgia is honest—"

"If there is any honesty in me," and Stevens' voice caught and broke.

"Yours, I am afraid," Father Hervey went on, including them both in his words, "is an example of those rare and exceptional cases

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where at the first sight marriage and divorce would seem almost permissible—”

“Yes,” Stevens interrupted eagerly.

“But those cases, too,” continued the priest in his melodious, resonant, trained voice, “have been thoroughly contemplated and considered by the deep wisdom of the Church.” He waited an instant, then pronounced sentence.

“They must be sacrificed for the rest. For if a single exception were once made, others would inevitably follow; and just as a trickle through a dike becomes a stream, and the stream a torrent, so whole people would be inundated in a flood of bestiality. If Georgia is, as you say—in any sense deprived of her womanhood, it is for the sake of millions on millions of others, who while the Church can raise her voice—and that, my friend, will be while the world lasts—shall *not* be abandoned in their helplessness.”

But Stevens, who had not been listening to the priest’s words as soon as he saw what conclusion they were coming to, clapped his hands softly together and smiled.

“I have it,” he said, “I have it at last. I will give Jim Connor a job in the Rio

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branch—with good pay, too—to drink himself to death on. Why not,” he asked himself vehemently, as if he would convince himself, “that’s practical.”

“It would be murder,” the priest spoke in a voice of horror.

“Not by the letter of the law—and that’s what you’re enforcing.”

“Of course I shall warn him.”

“My pay will talk louder,” said Stevens, knowing that the drunkard is always on ticket-of-leave, “and he’ll have all the time off he wants for aguardiente, stronger than whiskey, and cheaper. No white man can go against it for long in that climate.”

Georgia stood back, fascinated by the duel of the two men.

“You must be mad, Stevens,” said the priest with a note of fear in his voice, as if he realized that for the first time he was losing control of the situation.

“I’m a grown man. No other man can say ‘No’ to me forever. If Connor’s the one obstacle to our marriage—I’ll remove it.”

The two men looked at each other with steady and increasing anger.

The woman laid her hand upon her lover’s

Rebellion

shoulder. "I will get an absolute divorce, Mason," she said.

"What is the meaning of that?" the priest asked, and his deep voice shook.

"I could give you my soul, Father, but not his, too."

Stevens took her hands in his and they stood together, separated by nearly the width of the room from the old priest. He turned his eyes from them as from an impious spectacle, and looked upward, his lips moving silently as if in prayer. When he spoke, there was new force in his voice, as if he had received help and strength.

"Georgia," he spoke with conscious dignity, in the full authority of his office, "for fifteen hundred years your people whoever they were, artisans, farmers, lords and beggars, have belonged to our faith. The tradition is in your blood. You cannot cast it out. And as you grow older, and your blood cools, the fifteen hundred years will speak to you; you will regret your sin bitterly; and in the end you will leave him or you will die in fear."

"No, Father," she said, slowly as if feeling for her words. "It is all much plainer

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now. God is not a secret from the common people. He talks to each of us direct, not roundabout through priests and books and churches. He has put His purpose straight into our natures. He doesn't deal with us at second hand. And I begin to see His meaning—He gave us life to live—and to make again."

"According to His ordinance."

"Yes," her answer came quickly and boldly, "according to his ordinance, written in the heart of every woman—that the sin of sins for her is to live with a man in hate. When she does that—street girl or wife—she's much the same. Oh, there's many and many a degradation blessed by the wedding ring. That's against His plan, or why should He warn us so? Women—at least common, average women like me—were put here to love, not just to submit. If you forbid us to love in honor, you forbid us to live in honor. And the life God gave me, I will use and not refuse."

"My child! If you do not repent in time—" the suffering was plain in the old man's voice.



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"I cannot repent that I have become myself."

"Then," he slowly uttered the inexorable words, "you cannot receive absolution."

"Father," she answered, "the only thing I am sorry about, and I am sorrier than you know, is that it will make you, personally so unhappy!"

For a few seconds there was neither movement nor sound in the room. Then the old priest, with trembling hands and bent shoulders, passed from the room, and forever from Georgia's sight.

THE APE

Father Hervey went slowly and cautiously down the front steps, holding to the rail with his right hand and putting his left foot forward for each separate step. He did not remember being so weary and discouraged for many years. He walked back to the parish house, his head slightly bowed, his hands clasped behind him, unnoting, or nodding slightly and in silence to those who greeted him.

Among all the backslidings that he could remember in his long pastorate there had been few, perhaps none, that had saddened him more than this one. He had grieved for many a vain and foolish sheep that had strayed away into the briers of sin, not to be found again, until, wounded and wasted, it stumbled home to die. For such is the nature of sheep and poor souls.

But Georgia's case was not within that parable. She was not weak or will-less. Her

The Ape

sin had been with cold deliberation, in open, defiant rebellion against the Church, knowing the price of what she did. Very well, let her pay it. His old lips drew together in a thin bloodless line, as in his mind he condemned her in reprisal for her few years of rebellious happiness to eternal and infinite woe. God was merciful, but also he was just, and that was justice. Yet the priest could not persist in the mood. Presently, in spite of himself he softened toward her. That she—the little child whom he had held in his arms and breathed upon at the baptismal font, had come at last to this—

It was the age, this wicked age of atheism, he told himself fiercely, that had corrupted her. She could not be altogether, altogether to blame that the current had been too swift for her to swim against. Perhaps the gentle Savior would yet touch her spirit with His mercy and guide her at last to the foot of His throne.

Doubt poisoned the very air she breathed; it broke out like boils and deep sores in the newspapers and books, symptoms of the corruption beneath; it was strident in the crass

Rebellion

levity of the talk and slang of the street. It could not be escaped.

America, save for the Catholic fifteen million, doubted. The faithful stood like an island rising out of the waters of agnosticism. Was it strange that where the waves beat hardest, some of the sand was washed away?

Fifty years ago when he was a young man there had arisen in the world the great anti-Christ, who had been more harmful than Luther—Darwin, the monkey man. The Protestant churches, as ever uninspired, had first fought, then compromised with him. They tried to swallow and digest Darwinism. But Darwinism had digested them. The anthropoid ape had shaken the throne of Luther's Jehovan God. The greater anti-Christ had consumed the lesser.

The Church alone stood firm. She had admitted no orang-outangs to her communion table, and now her policy was justified by its fruits. Her faithful remained the only Christians in Christendom.

Ecclesia Depopulata, ran the old prophecy, the Church deserted. And the time was near upon them for the fulfillment of the words.

The Ape

France, Italy, Portugal, and even Spain, were in revolution against the Keys of Peter. The evil days were coming, *Ecclesia Depopulata*.

But a new age of faith was to follow, so also it was prophesied. The deathless Church could not die. Once again she was to rule a pious world in might, majesty, dominion and power—and her sway would endure until the last day.

He fell upon his knees in his bare ascetic study and presently arose refreshed, a fighting veteran in the army that will make no peace but a victor's.

WHICH BEGINS ANOTHER STORY

MAKES DIVORCE SPEED RECORD

Judge Peebles Sets New Pace for Untying Nuptial Knots.

Cupid went down for the count in the courtroom of Circuit Judge James M. Peebles when five couples were legally separated yesterday afternoon between 3 and 4 o'clock—about ten minutes for each case. This is said to establish a new record in Cook county for rapid-fire divorce. The cases, which were uncontested, were as follows:

Rachel Sieglinde vs. Max Sieglinde; abandonment.

Harmon A. Darroch vs. Lottie Darroch; infidelity.

Mary Stiles vs. Jonathan Stiles; drunkenness.

Georgia Connor vs. James Connor; drunkenness.

Sarah Bush vs. Oscar Bush; drunkenness and cruelty.

None of the defendants appearing, the decrees were entered by default.

Georgia read the item twice and smiled bitterly. So her divorce was one of the "rapid fire" variety! They said it had taken ten minutes. She knew it had taken ten years.

Which Begins Another Story

And Bush, Darroch, those other people—might they not also have walked in Gethsemane? Was this what the papers meant by their humorous accounts of “divorce mills”? She had received an especially vivid impression of Mr. Darroch and never would forget him. His case had come just before her own. He had spoken in a nasal, penetrating voice and she heard plainly every word when he testified. He was a short middle-aged man whose young wife, after ruining him by her extravagance, had run away with a tall traveling salesman. Even after that Mr. Darroch had offered to forgive her and take her back. But she wouldn’t come. Then finally he divorced her, as the reporter put it, with record-breaking speed.

The day after her decree was granted Georgia Talbot Connor and Mason Stevens went by automobile to Crown Point, Indiana, where, with Albert Talbot and Leila Frankland as witnesses, they were presently assured by a justice of the peace that they now were man and wife.

She was compelled to cross the state line for the ceremony because the laws of Illinois forbade her remarriage within a year; and

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she thought that she had waited long enough, the state legislature to the contrary notwithstanding.

The party of four, when they returned to Chicago had a bridal dinner in a private room, with white ribbons and cake. When it was finished Georgia kissed L. Frankland for the second time in their lives. The first time was in the automobile on the way back from Crown Point.

"Good-bye, Al," she said to her brother. "You must come to see us in Kansas City soon."

"Yes, indeed," said Stevens.

"I certainly will," promised Al.

"And mama," she spoke a little wistfully, "tell her we'd like her to come too if she would. Tell her, Al."

"Yes, all right."

"I'll send you something every week for her. Maybe, I'm not sure, maybe I'll keep on working."

"Maybe you won't," Mason interjected with conjugal promptitude.

"Don't be too sure," she laughed, "and anyway, if you don't behave nicely I can always go back to L. Frankland."

Which Begins Another Story

When the man and his wife were alone in their room he returned to the moment of their betrothal.

"Dearest," he said, "when the priest went out and left us—"

"Yes."

"I felt almost as if he were trying to lay a curse on us."

"Yes, that was the meaning of it."

"When he said you couldn't receive absolution."

"Yes, our—their teaching is that without absolution a soul in sin is damned eternally."

"And you will never be afraid?" he asked, almost fearful of his wonderful new happiness.

She pressed her husband's hand against her breast, so that he felt the strong and steady beating of her heart.

"No," she answered him, "I will never be afraid. For I believe that God will understand everything."

THE END.

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